

STACK
ANNEX

DA
560
B67
1900

A

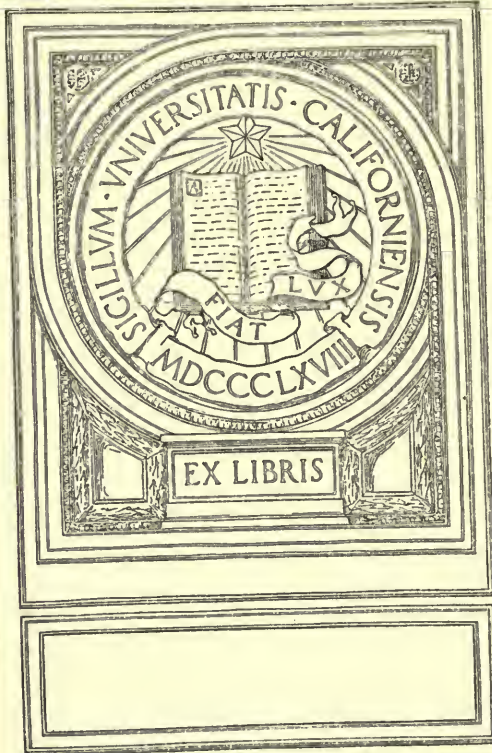
0
0
0
3
6
0
9
2
0
3



NC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

XX

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

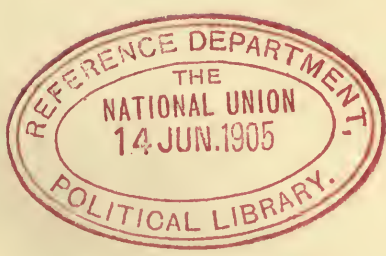


with

J. H. Rothmanley's

compliments

HUMOUR IN POLITICS.



HUMOUR IN POLITICS.

NOTES AND ANECDOTES OF TWENTY-FIVE
YEARS POLITICAL LIFE AND
EXPERIENCES.

BY

J. H. BOTTOMLEY, F.N.S.,

CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST AGENT, LANCASTER.

The greater portion of this book originally appeared in the *Lancaster Standard*, and at the time, in introducing the collection to his readers, the Editor of that Journal said: Mr. Bottomley is the Conservative Agent for the Lancaster Division, and apart from being one of the best known characters in this locality he easily bears the record for varied experiences among his fellow political agents. He has been a Committeeman, Canvasser, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chairman of Ward Organisations. He has been a Candidate for Parliament, School Board, Town Council, and Board of Guardians; always fighting at great odds, and always reducing the majority against him. As an Election Agent he won in 1888 the only seat taken at a bye-election in six years from the Government side, and in 1896 was the successful Election Agent for Colonel Foster, triumphing over his enemies at one of the most fiercely fought election petitions of modern times. As a lecturer he has spoken at political meetings in every county in England, for the Conservative Central Office, the National Union of Conservative Associations, the Primrose League, the Fair Trade League, the Tariff Reform League, &c., &c., and his notes made during twenty-five years of travel and experiences cannot fail to be interesting. He has probably assisted at more bye-elections than any other Registration Agent and Lecturer, and has certainly received more costly presentations as testimonials to his character and ability, while he has also been the recipient of a great many flattering communications from Cabinet Ministers and leading politicians. Mr. Bottomley has held five paid political appointments, and he is naturally proud of the fact that he never applied for any of them.

AMERICAN TO VINE
CALIFORNIA 2017A



J. H. Rottomley

DA

560

B67

1900

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.


SOME time ago I was asked how many prominent politicians I had had the honour of being introduced to, and when we got to jotting down the names of Beaconsfield, Gladstone, Salisbury, Iddesleigh, Balfour, Churchill, Halsbury, Smith, Stanhope, Carnarvon, Ashbourne, Curzon, Clarke, Ridley, Norfolk, Chaplin, Hanbury, etc., it was suggested how easy it would be to write a book of "reminiscences." That is perfectly true, but still there is nothing I could say under such a title which has not already been written hundreds of times. The idea, however, was conveyed to my mind that if some of the notes I have been in the habit of making for the last twenty-five years were put together, perhaps good readable matter might result.

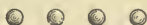
In scurrying about the country, one sees much life and scenery, and has opportunity of studying character and noting incidents. I have been down coal mines, tin mines, and salt mines; in a captive balloon, in a diving bell, and up to the top of an enormous mill chimney in a coal bucket; in a railway accident, pitched out of conveyances, etc. All this many others have done, so there is nothing novel in that. But very few people have "spoken at a

political meeting in every county in England," and as I always did keep a note book instead of trusting to memory, and for fifteen years made a weekly contribution to the press—"Political Buzzings by the Lancashire Little Bee,"—it is not a difficult matter to string together material for what may prove a readable book.

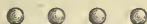
It has been said that there are only twenty-nine good stories in the world, and that twenty-seven of them are not fit for ladies to hear. This at any rate I undertake to disprove, even if some are not new, and others are "chestnuts." I don't promise an intellectual feast, nor a literary entertainment, only personal experiences and interesting reminiscences, along with plenty of stories—long and short, wise and otherwise, without any connecting link, plot, or moral. The object is to make these pages a sort of lucky bag, where the reader can dip at any time, and draw a prize every time. If the reader can get a smile out of them, or be interested for the moment, the object has been gained. I need only add, that if I say anything which is not strictly accurate, the person offended or aggrieved can append to the book, by way of advertisement, any explanation he desires. This is a free country, but adverts. must be paid for—cash down.

HUMOUR IN POLITICS.

LTHOUGH able to read alright without aid, my sight for a distance is very bad, and once when starting a meeting in Essex, having broken my glasses, I could not see a soul in the dark and barn-like building. The chairman, however, addressed someone at the back, so I followed in a miserable sort of way, and getting no response, collapsed, after a very short speech, whispering to the chairman, "What's become of the audience?" "He's just gone out to get a drink," he replied, at the same time saying there were only three at first, and two went early.

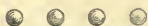


A friend of mine tells of a most irritating squalling baby at a meeting, with a mother who apparently never tried to quieten it. Getting quite cross, he said, "If you can't keep it quiet, missus, would you please sit on that child?" Quick as shot she replied, "I'll come and sit on you in a minute!" Nothing abashed, my amorous friend sat down on a chair, squared his knees, and said, "Come on," to the great delight of the meeting.

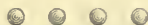


When Lord Carmarthen first became a candidate for Parliament he was very boyish looking. He was asked, "Does your mother know you're out?" "Yes, she does, and on Tuesday night she will know I'm in," and she did.

It was at the time of the National Union Conference, and I was deputed by a smoking-concert party at the Colonnade Hotel, Birmingham, to fetch Col. Burnaby from the Grand Hotel at one o'clock in the morning. Although he was in bed he most obligingly agreed to our desire, and astonished me by telling the audience that it was very little trouble to him to come, as he had to be continually getting up in bed to take medicine to keep his heart going.



It was in Rutland where I was lecturing on Fair Trade and asked the question, "What is it the farmer wants to make agriculture more prosperous?" when a voice said, "More meat, muck, and money!"

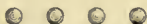


A Lancashire M.P. tells how at one of his meetings he was pointing out how he had attended to his duties, sitting up night after night recording his votes, when a voice from the gallery spoiled his point by adding, "We'll make thee sit up, devil, before we've done with thee!"



When the House of Lords insisted on a Redistribution of Seats Bill accompanying the measure extending the Franchise, Mr. Chamberlain challenged the Conservatives to hold an open meeting in support of the House of Lords. The Barrow Conservatives accepted the challenge, and I was announced as one of the speakers. When the train reached Barrow station, I noticed great crowds outside, and a number of bandmen. Hastening through the crowd I enquired for Ramsden Square, and was surprised to find a wagon there with seats in, but apparently no one in charge. As it was close upon time to commence I mounted the wagon, and sat there reading a paper. Soon the band came playing down the street, and accompanied by thousands of people the procession made for the Square, and a number of people jumped on the improvised platform. I was accosted. Explanations followed. The committee, it appeared, had specially engaged the band to meet me, and Mr. Waddington, the secretary, told me they had hunted for me all round the station. I was known only by repute, and they all looked for a great big man, and not such a little fellow as I proved to be.

On another occasion I was favoured with the attentions of a band. It was at Billingham, in Lincolnshire. Mr. W. E. Riley, the lively Conservative agent, met me at the station, and said, "We will have a procession up to the village to the meeting." "But where is the procession?" I inquired. "You and I will be the procession!" he said. The band being ready, Mr. Riley gave the order to march, and to my amazement and amusement the band began to play "Here comes the bogie man!"



Once I was in Somersetshire, and met a lively Revising Barrister, a Mr. Fitzgerald, at Weston-super-Mare. In retaining the name of a gentleman on the register to whom the Liberals objected on the ground that he was an inmate of a Lunatic Asylum, he said, "As long as Mr. Gladstone is Prime Minister of England, I shall not object to a lunatic remaining on the register!"

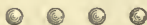


Perhaps one of the most comical platform incidents in my career was at Royton, in Oldham, many years ago. Mr. Maclean, the Conservative candidate, was fearfully annoyed by a crying baby—indeed he collapsed. When I was called upon to follow him I remarked, "If that baby can't be kept quiet there, hand it up here and I'll have a try at it." Whereupon a woman who had been annoyed also snatched hold of the baby and rushed down the room with it and handed it up to the platform. I spoke for half an hour with the child in my arms. It never winced, but the audience hugely enjoyed the scene and often talk of it to this day.

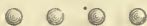


Along with Lord Edward Manners and a Mr. Donatti I was sent by Mr. Ablewhite, the Conservative agent for the Stamford Division of Lincolnshire, to speak at an open-air meeting at "The Devil's Hole." It was snowing heavily, and the audience was at work in the fields, getting iron ore, which lies on the surface just underneath the sods. Mr. Donatti talked to Lord Edward and our driver, while I shouted to the "audience" to come nearer. After a while probably fifty people came and listened to our speeches. We got into the trap, thanked them for their kind and polite attention, and then the whole lot commenced to snowball us as we drove away!

Something besides an audience is wanted occasionally. For some days before reaching Edale, near the Peak of Derbyshire, several years ago, before the railway was opened, I had not been shaved, and as I was to stop with two maiden ladies, and was invited to dine with other guests before the meeting, I was terribly anxious to be cleaned up a little. The policeman I interviewed told me a barber came there once a week, and he had been there the day before. The vicar of the neighbouring village, who came to be chairman, said probably his man could shave me. He was interviewed, promised to drive for his tackle, when I casually remarked "Have you ever shaved anyone besides yourself before?" "Oh, yes," he had, mentioning a name. Explanations followed, and I confess to being startled to learn that it was only after the man had died that he had shaved him—or in other words, he had only practised on a corpse! He did not shave me!

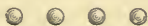


When I spoke at Colchester large long posters—streamers—were on the walls announcing "The Lancashire Little Bee is coming," and the theatre was secured. The place was packed. I had the greatest difficulty in getting into the place, being refused admission at several doors. At the stage door when I said, "I am the lecturer," the man in charge replied, "You are the sixth bloke who has tried that dodge."

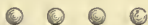


I remember a Mr. L. Hayter coming all the way from London to Cantley, near Doncaster, to speak. It was a wretched, dark, rainy night, and only half a dozen people attended. My idea was to have a chat round the fire, but Mr. H. took a fancy to the schoolmaster's rostrum, and when he ascended this I noticed a labouring man sat on the end of a form fast asleep. Mr. H., forgetting his small audience, and thinking of the large room, said "Mr. Chairman and gentlemen" so loud that he wakened the sleeper, who fell on the floor, pulling the form up by his arms, grasping one end, and uttering a fearful yell as if terribly frightened. Mr. H. commenced to laugh, and could not stop shrieking. I never witnessed anyone in a laughing fit before; the rest of the people caught on, and there we were, chairman, lecturer, agent, and audience, laughing at one another. A more ridiculous spectacle could not be imagined.

When on a lecture tour in Bucks, my last meeting was to be at Hughenden, and I was very anxious to get away home; but Sir Samuel Wilson, the new owner, touched a weak spot when he asked me to stop at Hughenden Manor, and "sleep in the same room that Lord Beaconsfield used to occupy." I stayed there that night.

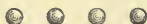


I was equally touched some years later, after speaking at a large Primrose League meeting at Hawarden. Having got permission to go through the Castle grounds we met the "G.O.M." My friendly guide stopped to chat with him, and introduced me, and jokingly poked fun, by repeating what I had said at the meeting, viz., that "I hoped the audience would cheer the name of Lord Salisbury so loudly that the pots on the shelves at Hawarden Castle would rattle a merry castanet." The old Liberal leader laughed heartily, hoped we had a nice meeting, and chatted merrily with us on various topics. Although the interview was short, I always feel proud to have had the pleasure of it.

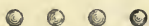


I was the "big draw" at a tremendous Primrose League meeting once in the West of England. Before the meeting started the secretary was amazed because I appeared in ordinary clothes, telling me their speakers always came in evening dress, apparently forgetful of the fact that he had announced me as "a great working-man speaker." A popular Duke presided, a candidate spoke first for forty minutes, and another seconded the resolution, taking up half an hour, and then "the organising secretary" for those parts hoped I had no objection to his speaking before me, and he then orated for over an hour, "carried away, you know, by the enthusiasm." It was a quarter-past ten when the "lecturer" was called on, and I simply told a short story about the lad in chapel who called out "Say amen" when the parson said "What shall I say next?" The platform people cheered sympathetically, the noble chairman came to me to apologise, and the audience shouted "Go on." Telling them my lecture would take over an hour, I asked all who were prepared to listen to hold up both hands. Then I "went on," and never enjoyed myself so much in my life, the only regret being to know that crowds of coachmen were cursing me outside. They were ordered for ten, and they were not required until 11.30!

Travelling once all the day to Yorkshire, I had no chance to get a proper meal, but expected as I was to stay with a J.P. and a manufacturer a good tea or dinner before the meeting. I hurried off to the Hall nearly famishing, and spoke over an hour, and naturally was tired out, and apparently looked it, for when we got home, my host and his wife pressed me to go to bed, never asking if I had a mouth. But I moved not. After a time the servant came and whispered to the mistress, and eventually I was taken into the secret, that they never indulged in suppers, that they had proposed to themselves a couple of boiled onions, with bread and butter, adding, "I suppose, Mr. B., you never take anything of the kind?" I was rude, no doubt, as I replied, "Chance would be a fine thing." Explanations followed—they thought I should have dined on the way, they did not know there was no dining saloons on the railway I travelled by, etc. Ample apologies were tendered, I ate the two big onions, etc., and can honestly say I never enjoyed anything so much in my life.



The shortest speech I ever heard was at the luncheon after the opening of the Middleton and Tonge Conservative Club by the Right Hon. the Earl and Countess of Wilton. In response to the toast of his health, the Earl, who was suffering from a sore throat, held up a bottle (of champagne) in one hand, and with the other pointed at his throat, merely saying "Mums the word!" naturally eliciting sympathetic laughter and cheers.



A well-known Primrose League lecturer at Newton Abbott was dealing with trade matters, and ridiculed the Free Traders' cry for cheapness. He said, "Cheap labour is no good—cheap guns, cheap watches, cheap horses, cheap things of any sort are no good, above all cheap labour is worthless—don't you forget that, write it on a paper, and to impress it on your mind, paste it in your hat." When questions were invited a rough-looking character asked how much it was to join the Primrose League. After a conference with the chairman, my friend said, "Only threepence, that's cheap enough, isn't it?" The questioner stood still, and excellently mimicking the lecturer said, "Cheap things of any sort are no good. They are worthless—don't you forget that, write it on a paper, and to impress it on your mind, paste it in your hat." In a sense the speaker was hoist with his own petard, and there was great laughter at the man's retort.

Twitting a friend that he had fallen asleep during a political meeting, he indignantly denied the charge, so I asked, "Well, what was the speech about?" He replied, "About half-an-hour too long."

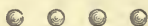
● ● ● ●

After speaking at a large public gathering an adjournment was made to an hotel where a smoking concert was soon arranged, and I had to make a second speech. Before doing so the agent came to me, shook hands, thanked me for coming, and said, "Good night." I was a little taken aback, as he lived close by, so I inquired where he was going. He astounded me by declaring, "I'm not going away, but I'm sure to get drunk, and might forget to thank you and say good night later!" No wonder he did not long retain that position.

● ● ● ●

I had a very queer experience in Derbyshire. Asked to address a Primrose League meeting, I arrived at the station according to promise, and, as there was no one to meet me, by dint of inquiry discovered the hall. The meeting commenced without apparently anyone having asked for me. When called upon, however, I left the audience, ascended the platform, and spoke. Compliments were showered on me, and as the audience dispersed, a great many people shook hands and bade me "Good night." Eventually I was left with the hall keeper, who turned out to be a Liberal. He naturally did not know who was to look after me, or where I was to be put up for the night. He very consolingly told me there was no hotel in the neighbourhood, that the little beerhouse two miles away would be shut up now and the inhabitants in bed, and that the railway station was locked up as there was no train to anywhere until seven o'clock in the morning. So he turned out the lights, and we went out into the inky darkness. I stuck to this Liberal caretaker like a leech, until I was nearly frightened to death by the full flash of what turned out to be a policeman's lamp. Explanations ensued, and happily the "Bobby" was a Tory, who knew me when stationed near Doncaster. He was on night duty and we arranged—he said it was a great honour—that I should sleep in his bed. Happily such an experience is rare. Letters and telegrams followed me home apologising, and explaining that the local secretary who had undertaken everything had been suddenly called to London on urgent business and he forgot to depute someone to look to the "speaker of the evening."

The next night, strange to say, I was entertained in a castle in Oxfordshire, attended by servants of all descriptions. I went with his lordship—my host—to a country dinner, and on our return, which was rather late, I was asked if I desired a drink and a smoke, and wanting to be sociable replied "Thanks." I was then marched up a long flight of stairs to the top of the building, and shown into a sort of conservatory on the roof. There was a bright fire and whisky, gin, brandy, and wines, along with cigars and cigarettes, on the table, and all sorts of papers and magazines. My host then said he was very tired, bade me good night, and hoped I would not hurry but enjoy myself. The truth was I too was very tired, and did not want to drink or smoke. My bag had been sent on early, no one had shown me the room, all the servants had gone to bed, and I shall never forget the mysterious hunt for my sleeping apartment.



A slip of the tongue often spoils a good speech. I remember scoring well at a meeting until, in conclusion, I called upon the audience to "rally round Lord Rosebery," meaning of course Salisbury. The opposition jubilated for a time. I told them the story of the man who in a field roared as he saw a young bull pitch a man over the fence. Then the animal rushed at him and tossed him over. As he sat there on the grass he remarked, "It's a good job I laughed then, because I shan't do it now!" Taking up the peroration I completed it all right, and added, "It is a good job for you: you Radicals laughed before, it is our turn now."

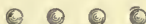


Tom Nash, Conservative candidate for Stockport, was one of the most amusing and effective speakers ever heard. At a meeting we were at he said, "I hate and detest the kind of flunkey nonsense the Liberal journals write anent the Premier (Mr. Gladstone). Referring to the way in which he received a deputation from the trades unions, they treated the world to the important statement that the 'aged minister skipped up the staircase two steps at a time.' (Loud laughter and cheers.) Really, if Mr. Gladstone were a kangaroo or a chimpanzee they could not write more utter nonsense about him."

Although I have had many chances of sitting in the Gallery of the House of Commons, I have not very often taken advantage of them. I was there in June, 1892, when the debate was on with respect to adjourning over the Derby Day. Lord Elcho, who had spoken in favour of it in 1891, now seconded Sir Wilfred Lawson's motion against it, in a remarkably good and funny speech. What remains on my memory is the fact that Mr. Sidney Gedge got up to speak very often and just as often failed. He was shouted down at last on his own side of the House, and then the Liberals took to shouting, "Gedge," "Gedge," until at last the Speaker called upon him, and he rose to thank his friends opposite. No sooner had he started than the men who lured him on, began to yell, "Divide," "Divide," until he was most effectually shut up. It was the funniest and silliest performance I ever saw in Parliament.

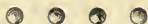


In 1885, when I was "the working man's candidate for Gateshead," and had gone to speak in the Co-operative Hall at Oldham, I was hurriedly fetched from the platform into the ante-room, and introduced to three gentlemen, who said they were a deputation to ask "If you will kindly spare a night to address a meeting for Mr. Gladstone?" I had never heard of any Gladstone but the G.O.M., or at any rate could think just then of no other. The deputation were very much surprised when I inquired, "Why whatever is up with the old gentleman?" "Mr. Gladstone is not an old gentleman." "No, of course, I know he is as lively as a chicken," etc., etc. It transpired they were supporters of Mr. J. E. Gladstone, the Conservative candidate for the Spenn Valley Division of Yorkshire.



Mr. George Hill Smith, the well-known Irish orator, came last on the programme at a fearfully rowdy meeting at a Northampton bye-election. I held the fort for a time, but at last collapsed. When Mr. Smith got up, the audience—which was surging about, the seats being taken away—commenced singing a very catchy chorus of an election song. In the front row, next to the reporters, was a man singing lustily, and Mr. Hill Smith, catching hold of a glass of water from the chairman's table, pitched the whole contents down the man's throat. It was the cleverest feat I ever saw performed at a political meeting, and probably could never again be repeated.

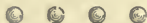
The present Judge Darling came down as M.P. to speak at a bye-election at Retford. I was deputed to meet him at the station, and see him off to a country meeting. It was a horrible night. He was good enough to start at once in a fearful snow-storm, fortified only with a sandwich and glass of wine. I was to order a good dinner to be ready for his return. When he did come, after some hours, he naturally was cold and furious. The driver had taken wrong turns, and they had never discovered the meeting nor the village. It was a long way to come to Retford from London simply to a late dinner.



When I was appointed agent for the Doncaster Division I determined to storm the Radical strongholds, and accordingly booked the schoolroom at Kiveton Park, a colliery district, having secured a good lecturer. Every voter had a bill sent him by post giving a personal invitation. Although we waited in the school-room over an hour, not a soul turned up besides the speaker, the old woman caretaker, and myself. A lively start for a new agent! I always suspect the word had been passed round to boycott us, but we did get them later on.

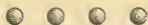


A brother agent tells a good story about a long-winded speaker at a concert-meeting. As there were many songs, speeches were to be short. The lecturer arranged with the agent to prick his leg with a pin when he was to conclude. The order was obeyed, repeatedly without effect, and when after speaking fifty minutes, the lecturer sat down amid the black looks of the authorities, mutual explanations ensued. The lecturer had a cork leg and the agent had made the mistake of operating on that.

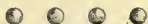


It's an old dodge to second a vote of thanks to a lecturer, in order to pay him a doubtful compliment. I remember a case in point. The speaker told the story of a driver asking a farmer which of the two roads in front of him was the best. "I don't know." "Why, don't you live about here?" "Yes." "Then why don't you know?" "Because whichever you take you will wish you had taken the other." The moral was that both political parties were alike—bad.

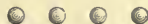
"The tickets for the tea and concert will be sixpence each; children half price, to be had at the door," announced the secretary, amid laughter.



A good retort often upsets a speaker. For instance I heard a friend, replying to an opponent, say, "He is the biggest Ammanias living in the town," whereupon a man in the audience shouted, "Why, where are you living now?"

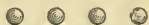


We had a unique experience at Doncaster at the bye-election in 1888. I was Conservative Agent there at that time, and the Liberals booked every hall in the town one wet night, and we had Mr. Hill Smith to speak. We engaged the swimming bath. All the water was run out, and forms put there instead, borrowed from several public-houses. Mr. Smith had a crowded audience, and he spoke under the spring or diving platform, this acting as a splendid sounding board. The venture was a terrific success, partly because of the novelty of "a meeting in the swimming bath." I booked every hall, including the bath, the night before the election.

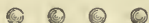


A hunting squire is not always an ideal chairman. For obvious reasons I omit name and place. I was "highly honoured with Sir Henry coming to preside," said the secretary. The chairman had had a long ride, and was dining at the hotel and took a lot of moving. Eventually we reached the hall, and I soon learned there had been a poaching case before the court. The audience—all shoemakers—yelled "Rabbits, rabbits," as we filed on the platform. Sir H. got up to speak, and was met with howls and yells and cries of "Sit down." "Gentlemen," he said, but they resented the charge, so he retorted with "You're no gentlemen," and this they resented more than the other statement. After several most ineffectual attempts to speak, he cried out, "Shall I tell you what you are?" and in unison the audience shouted, "Yes, what are we?" Putting his fingers in his red waistcoat armlets Sir H. said, "Well, you are a set of — Radical shoeblacks!" It required great activity on our part with chairs to stamp the fingers of that infuriated audience as they attempted to storm the platform.

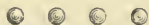
At Fleetwood a speaker said: "I have just seen two posters—on the top, 'Vote for Heap,' and below, 'God save the Queen.' The reason of the latter prayer is evident from the former command."



When the Lancaster Election Petition was being heard, although next to Colonel Foster I was the most important interested personage, it was with the greatest difficulty I got into court. A number of strange police were on duty, and as I had no admission card it was amusing to be told, "Young man, you can't get in, so it is no good you trying on any impudence." Mr. Bingham, the courteous keeper of the Castle, rescued me from the crowd with the aid of friends, or I might have been charged with being a defaulter.



At Newport (Mon.) the Conservatives utilised a lantern show at the election. They put a portrait on of a prominent supporter, who is an undertaker. The crowd were puzzled to account for this, but a lady explained, "Oh, I suppose he's got the order for Spicer's funeral." Spicer was the Liberal candidate.

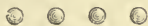


My first speech at Lancaster was on November 29th, 1888. At Wennington an old man got into the train I was coming by, and began to talk. He asked me where I was going, and in answer to my inquiry if there was anything specially on that night in town, he strongly urged me to go to the Palatine Hall, "There was a fellow called Bottomley, a Tory, going to talk, and he would catch it. Lancaster was a Liberal town, and they wanted none of his kidney there—unless he is very careful he will get pitched out," and so on. I kept up the talk, and as he told me he was going and was deaf, and should get there early, I told him I would go and promised to look out for him. The meeting was a little lively, and I well remember being tackled by a prominent Socialist, who came on the platform and wished to make a speech. But the meeting was not near so lively as my former friend had hoped it would be, and I was spared the "pitching out" process. After the meeting he came up to me, and, after congratulating me on the meeting, we supped together at the King's Arms.

It is difficult at times to know what to say to interrupters whose remarks are apparently sincere. I was present at a lecture where a Conservative was dealing with the history of politics, and he was continually challenged to go further back than 1880-70-60-30, and he at last got exasperated and declared, "Why, if I had time I could prove it was a Tory who put the brass knocker on Noah's Ark." Although it proved nothing, it caused a smile, and stopped the interrupters.



Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, M.P., had a bad time with a noisy interrupter in the Palatine Hall, Lancaster. The man continually shouted "Down with the landlords, etc." In proposing a vote of thanks I worked off "a wheeze" which took on immensely. Remarking, "I know why my friend calls out down with the landlords—most likely his slate is full." "I don't mean that sort of landlord," he replied. "Oh! you mean you want some land, not some ale." "That's it," he answered. "I will give you all I have, which is not much—on one condition." "What is that?" "That you go into immediate occupation of it." "I accept your terms, where is it?" I rejoined, "It is only 6ft. by 4ft., and it is in the churchyard," at which the audience screamed with laughter, the interrupter joining.

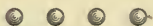


Lord Derby once had the gout. An admirer sent him as a present some white wine, saying if he would forsake all others, he would be cured. The Earl having tasted it, returned the wine stating, "I've tried both, and I'd rather have the gout."

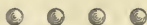


Some years ago, when I lived in Doncaster, a man named F—, a clothier, who was also an autograph hunter, placed in his window an envelope with the name of the Prime Minister on it. I had a strange desire to know what these two great men had been corresponding about, and took the unusual course of asking at the fountain head. His Lordship's secretary sent me a letter he had received purporting to be signed by the Secretary of the Conservative Association, enclosing a vote of confidence. Amusement was caused by my exposure, showing the man was a Radical, that he consequently could not be a Tory secretary, and that no such meeting had been called, and that the "Salisbury" on the envelope was only an official frank, and was not an autograph at all.

I was once to address a gathering in South Wales. We were there to time, with chairman, platform, crowd, and everything necessary for the meeting, save one thing—a hearing. The crowd were determined there should be no speaking, and after vainly waiting for quietness, we gave it up. This is how a local reporter described it: “The meeting would have ended abruptly if it had ever begun!” I have always regarded that as a gem of journalism.

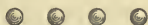


Never destroy letters. This practice proved most useful at Lancaster. Mr. Leadam, the Liberal candidate in 1895, in his election address, called attention to his being a member of the Committee of the Farmers' Alliance as an incentive to agriculturalists to vote for him. Turning up old correspondence I was enabled to produce a letter from Mr. W. J. Herman, Caversham, Reading, written to me in March, 1891, in response to a request for their literature, saying, “The Farmers' Alliance, of which I was president, is the same body as that over which the late Mr. James Howard presided. Owing, however, to the apathy of farmers generally, we decided to cease operations, for so little interest was taken or help given to the association.” We sent a note to every voter saying, “Have nothing to do with Mr. Leadam and his defunct Farmers' Alliance.”

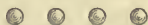


I once had the misfortune to invite two prominent politicians to speak at the same meeting, without letting one know the other was coming. They were to travel by the same train from London, and I arranged to meet them on arrival, having engaged a cab to convey them from the station to the club where they were to dine with the chairman and committee. Until these two gentlemen were seen at different ends of the platform, standing waiting for each other to move, it never entered into my head that there was likely to be a hitch. The first M.P. I approached asked, “Is that circus clown yonder going to your meeting? because if he is I'm not!” My horror can better be imagined than described. How I got these two to the same dinner, how they spoke at the same meeting from different sides of the chairman, and travelled back to London by the same train, would take a volume to explain. For reasons only too palpable, I mention no place, time, or names, but it was an experience I shall never forget, and hope never to repeat.

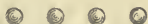
It is public property that I often "try" to tell stories on platforms. Not long ago I gave a lecture in a certain town, and it took remarkably well. Three days after I went to another town, and repeated this address in the presence of an old lecturing friend, who jotted down the stories, which to him were new, and pleased him. He went the week after to speak at the first-named town, and not knowing, or not thinking, I had been there, was unplussed to find that the audience stared at him and refused to laugh as he discharged the same old jokes at them as I had told the week previous.



I am reminded of Sir Ellis A. Bartlett's reply to a man in Sheffield who demanded a straight "Yes" or "No" to a question. Sir Ellis put up his eyeglass and glared at the man, asking if he would answer "Yes" or "No" to a question. He said he would. "Well, are you as big a fool as you look, or as big a fool as I think you?—yes or no!"

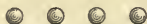


A friend of mine, tackled in the same way, demanded to know if his tormentor could answer every question with a plain "Yes" or "No"? He vowed he could. "Well, what time is it?" and as the idiocy of the whole business dawned on us we laughed outright.

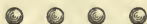


Sir Elliott Lees, M.P., at a Birkenhead bye-election, made a telling point in a speech by quoting as an illustration a verse of Scripture about a shipwreck at Malta, where "they cast four anchors out of the stern." I went to a Liberal meeting, and heard great fun poked by Mr. Havelock Wilson at Sir Elliott wanting to represent a seaport and not knowing which end of a boat the anchor was cast from. I ran to the Conservative headquarters, creating consternation by demanding that someone should find me a Bible. Of course, there was no Bible in the place, and I had to hunt outside for one. I then discovered that Sir Elliott was quite right. The passage is in the Acts, and refers to St. Paul's shipwreck when on his way to be tried at Rome. He was simply quoting the Scriptures, and those Liberals who thought him ignorant of seafaring matters had overshot the mark. Query: Why did they throw anchors out of the stern in Bible days?

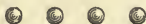
The late Sir John Astley, when Conservative candidate for Brigg, always amused his audiences. I remember an opponent asking, "What about Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Liquor Bill?" meaning the Permissive Bill. Sir John, who evidently was not well posted on the matter, caused a roar of laughter by his jaunty reply: "I don't know much about Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Liquor Bill, but I do know mine is a — big one."



Lord Palmerston, at Taunton, when asked if he would support a certain Radical Bill, said, "I will." Then he stopped, and the Rads. cheered. "Not," continued his Lordship. (Conservative cheers.) When these ceased he added, with a merry twinkle, "not tell you," amid uproarious merriment.

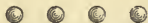


Nothing amuses me so much as to hear old political friends tell of what they did in the olden time—how much they spent, the fees they received, patronage dispensed, etc., etc. Why, I have actually been charged by opponents in an election petition with omitting from the election accounts the candidate's wife's Christmas cards to her personal friends, whilst an attempt was made to upset us on the plea that a voter had his train fare paid—value, twopence halfpenny!

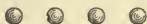


The Rev. Joseph Symes, ex-Wesleyan minister, with whom I often crossed swords on the Bradlaugh question, once met in debate the Rev. Brewin Grant. This was Mr. Symes' idea of debate, as shown in the printed report:—"I ought to feel honoured at meeting the lowest clown the pulpit ever produced; the greatest mountebank that ever stepped . . . I have no doubt that I could make my fortune out of him going through the country with him as a performing bear. This is the man who is selected to put down secularism. As I don't intend to enter the show business, I'll tell you what I will do. I'll write to Barnum. But what shall I say to him? What are the animal's points? He can stand upon his hind legs almost as well as a man; he can smoke a cigar; he can open his mouth wide enough to swallow Jenah and the whale at one gulp and all the Bible absurdities at another; he can tell fibs like a lawyer or a vicar," etc., etc.

One of the best catches I ever made was when a Labour member started a series of political articles in a Yorkshire paper. After reading a long historical disquisition exposing the Tories, signed with his own name, I discovered and exposed the fact that he had copied the whole of it from a Radical pamphlet, written by a Mr. Yates, without a word of acknowledgment.



The late Miss Lydia Becker once scored over an opponent when advocating women's suffrage. He asked, "How it was that women had never produced a Shakespeare or a Wellington?" She simply ejaculated, "Haven't they? Who did, then?"

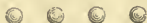


An old political friend who went out to Brazil to fit up a mill, told me on his return of the patriotism of one of the men under him, who, when asked how he liked the place, said, "Oh, tidy well. It wouldn't be a bad place at all if there weren't so — many foreigners about." He apparently forgot that in that case he was the foreigner there.

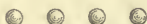


A few weeks after meeting Mr. Joseph Howes in public debate at Oldham, I was privileged to preside at a great working men's meeting addressed by Mr. Henry Chaplin, M.P. My opponent in debate had made a point of some Peers being Churchmen and Horseracers, and it apparently caused this question to be handed to me at the big meeting:—"Mr. Chairman, is Mr. Chaplin a member of the Church of England, a member of the Turf, also a gambler?—A Working Man." Mr. Chaplin's reply was amusing and effective. He said: "As to being a member of the Church of England, I reply unhesitatingly in the affirmative. I am also a member of the Jockey Club. (Laughter.) I have also won races and made bets. (Renewed laughter, and cries of "Give us a good tip, guvnor," and roars of laughter.) Some years ago, in the early part of my career I won the Derby—(more laughter)—a transaction the memory of which has never ceased to give me considerable pleasure. (Cheers.) I won it, for the information of the gentleman who put the question, with a horse called 'The Hermit,' which, I am glad to say, taking him upon the whole, was the best friend I ever had in my life." (Continued laughter.)

After telling a very funny story, Mr. F. was asked by an opponent, "Do you think that proper talk to intelligent men?" "No," he replied, "I have been addressing my remarks to you, sir; now, I begin to address my remarks to the audience."



I was once with a candidate for a week, and each night he delivered the same speech, word for word, telling the same story each time. On the third night a reporter sitting in front was heard to say, "Oh, that lovely story again!" The candidate, not so much taken aback as I expected, said, "The gentleman in the brown suit at the reporters' table has heard this story before; but you, my friends, have not been so fortunate, and I will tell it to you." Next day the candidate, again looking at the reporters, said, "With the permission of my friend down there, I should like to tell you a funny story at this stage." This variation did the speaker good; it was practice, and he can now with safety be left to speak from fresh notes.

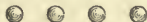


The Radical M.P. said:

Why prosecute the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common,
And leaves the bigger scoundrel loose
Who steals the common from the goose?

The Conservative candidate replied:

Our member says, "Come, no excuse,
"Return the commons to the goose";
But this is how we read the summons:
"Return the goose unto the Commons."

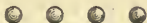


It was Lord Cranborne (now Lord Salisbury) who remarked in the House of Commons, in reference to a speech of Mr. Gladstone, that it was worthy of a "pettifogging attorney." A short time afterwards his Lordship rose with much ceremony and said he had made a remark about Mr. Gladstone for which he desired to apologise. "I remarked, sir, that a speech of the right honourable gentleman was worthy of a pettifogging attorney, and I now hasten to offer my apologies—(cheers)—to the attorneys!"

In Bedfordshire, while taking a stroll in the daytime, I met a labourer, and inquired how far it was to the next village. The man answered in a casual way:—

“Just about a dog’s trot, sir.”

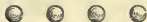
“How far is that?” I asked. He scratched his head and replied: “About as far as it would take ye to smoke an even pipeful of terbacker, sir.”



An agent I knew was a puzzle. He was greatly admired for his ability and work, but his committee were always complaining of his habits. In the middle of a by-election, his chairman asked me to try and find him. I went the round of the public-houses and clubs, and could not find a trace of him; but after a while he turned up drunk. He was often seen like that, but I never met anyone who saw him drinking; certainly he never tasted in my company.

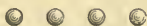


A well-known speaker who is generally advertised as “Mr. Councillor ———, J.P., C.C.,” spoke with me at a great meeting some years ago in Podmorden Town Hall. The audience was very unruly, but my friend had carefully prepared his speech, and he finished by saying, “I will now bring my remarks to a conclusion by quoting those never to be forgotten words—ah—those never—to-be-forgotten—words”—(a terrible pause)—and turning suddenly to me, anxiously enquired—“What are they, B.?” I was too amused to think, indeed I blurted out, “How the dickens should I know!” Needless to comment, we all yelled with laughter.

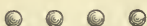


A little ingenuity was displayed at a Conservative Club billiard handicap. We had a smoking concert, and just before I was called upon for “the speech of the evening,” the chairman said “he had promised a prize as a reward of prowess, and had told them it should compare favourably with the small sums spent in other places.” (Laughter.) Then, turning to the blushing recipient, he handed him the advertised prize of “the value of five guineas,” amid loud cheers. In deference to the general call, the proud victor opened the casket containing his prize, and displayed, amid great merriment, five boxes of Beecham’s Pills—worth a guinea a box.

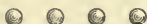
An old soldier, a Tory, came up to vote in a Radical carriage, explaining his conduct by saying he was always taught in the army "to quarter on the enemy."



Every platform speaker occasionally blurts out something he would gladly withdraw an instant later. In the Glasgow Police Hall, a great hobbler in the middle of my address called me a liar. To the amazement of the gentlemen of the committee, I went to the edge of the platform, and pointing to the interrupter, shouted: "If you don't withdraw that remark I will come down and knock the stuffing out of you." The audience roared when the individual instantly got up and said: "I am very sorry if I have——" A lot of the prominent workers, mistaking my bounce for courage, and apparently tickled by my size, wanted to carry me shoulder high up the street after the meeting.

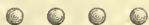


Asked what he thought of a lecture I had just given, an old farmer said: "It was right enough, but a couple of hours' rain would have done more good."



When some people want money or drink, they are ever full of resource and invention. A case in point occurred during the Lancaster election petition trial. Two pals were very dry, and they hit on a plan whereby their parched throats could be damped. One was to go home and go to bed. The other went to the detectives and quietly insinuated that there were any amount of cases of bribery they had not investigated. "Come and have a drink," said the "detec.," "while we have a chat. What are the cases you know of?" "Oh, I know a case of a man who knows something." They were to visit this man, but he was duly found in bed. He refused absolutely—to say anything "until he had seen some of the gentleman's money." How much did he want? Very well, he should have ten shillings. "And now, who is this person you know who has been bribed, and what did he get?" Imagine the scene when the man jumped out of bed, began putting on his trousers, chuckling as he replied: "I'm the man who has just been bribed, and me and my pal are going to spend this ten bob. Will you come and join us?"

One man who was met in the street by the "detec." admitted that he had paid several men on the day the poll was declared, and that he had their names and addresses at home in a book, with the amounts paid to each noted. He would come to the office to-morrow with the book. He had drinks and a gift of money then, and the day after this was repeated. The names and addresses were duly copied, along with the amounts, and then he was asked: "What did you say to the men when you paid them?" "I swore at 'em." "Why did you do that?" "Because I had had such a bad day." Explanations ensued. He was a betting man, who had only squared up with the people he bet with, and he knew nothing at all about election matters. Tableaux!



Two men had a fight over the petition, and one got a black eye. The other told a "detec." he knew a man who "got something" over the election. The "detec." got the address and went to interview the man in question. He refused to talk "until his mouth was wet," and eventually he got five shillings to tell "what he got over the election." Pointing to his black eye, he said: "I got this, and the chap that sent you here gave it to me."

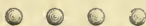


One of the funniest things I ever saw was at an afternoon show of a travelling pantomime—"Dick Whittington." I went in the theatre merely to pass away time until required for my evening lecture. The great scene represented the sea—"the sea," of course, being painted canvas stretched across the stage. The canvas somehow caught on to the "front cloth," which on being raised took up "the sea," and we—the audience—saw a lot of men lying on their backs throwing their arms and legs about, to represent the waves. Their eyes were closed with cloths to keep out the dust, and they only realised their ludicrous positions by hearing the audience roaring with laughter.

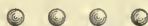


Trying to get to know the age of a lodger claimant, the Liberal agent asked the young man's mother, who appeared for him, "Is your son a man?" She replied, "I don't think he's a woman, anyhow!"

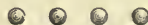
The chairman at a lecture I gave, in apologising for the absence of the local secretary in consequence of his wife's death, said, "Let us hope that the separation between the deceased and her husband won't be for long."



At a bye-election some queer people turn up. Why the authorities allow some of them to take part is a puzzle. Take a sample of this wasted oratory:—"Gentlemen, I am glad to see you, and to see your noble town. Gentlemen, I have seen falls which I am told are 150 feet high. That is a most interesting fact. Gentlemen, Rome had her Cæsar, her Scipio, her Brutus; but Rome in her proudest day never had a waterfall 150 feet high! Gentlemen, Greece had her Pericles, her Demosthenes, and her Socrates; but Greece in her palmiest days never had a waterfall 150 feet high! Gentlemen, go on; no people ever failed who had a waterfall 150 feet high!" This sort of blatherumskite generally comes from briefless barristers who offer their services in order to get practice in speaking.



When the Bradlaugh question was to the front, a Baptist minister in Bolton, in public meeting, mentioned the differences in the Liberal party, adding, "May they all hang together." "Amen," said a Tory in the audience. "No, no; I don't mean as my friend there means; I mean may they hang together in accord and concord." "I don't care what sort of a cord it is, so long as it is strong enough," replied the incorrigible, amid great laughter.



The Tories of West Dorset having got their work done soon, and finding the Liberals importing many strange workers, issued placards headed—

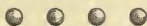
PICKPOCKETS.

Information has reached the constituency that a number of the above profession are coming into West Dorset Disguised as Radical Canvassers.

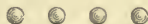
Electors are hereby cautioned against admitting strangers to their houses.

By Order.

With the late Mr. Byron Reed—before he became M.P. for Bradford—I spent some hours late at night in a public hall at Darlington, the police thinking it safer for us to remain there than to go to his house. In consequence of something Mr. Reed had said, the Liberals broke up our meeting, some “lover of free speech” blew down the gaspipe, and when the place was in darkness some miscreants shied inch and a half screws all over the place. Luckily no one was badly injured.



“If you elect Mr. Sheriff Lawrence, I will come and give you another speech,” said a tiresome friend of mine at a Newport election meeting, and we afterwards wondered what they thought of the suggestion.

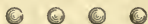


A week in South Wales in 1884 will always live in my memory. A Welsh Calvinistic minister tramped a wonderful lot of miles in order to put me through a cross-examination each night. The last meeting was in the Rhondda Valley at Ystrad-y-fodwn. The committee anticipated a row, and they were not disappointed. The hall was packed, and my clerical friend was there—as usual. He followed the chairman by demanding to have an equal time to speak with Mr. Bottomley, or they would refuse to hear anyone. I got my back up, and told him “We would see who was going to boss that show.” I appealed to the audience that I ought at any rate to have my first fling, and having secured fair order, talked for over an hour, thanked the audience for listening, announced the National Anthem, and then—pandemonium. Part of the audience sang, part yelled, and part tried to get out safe, and we got to the hotel under police escort. But that little preacher did not preach that night at our meeting, notwithstanding his threats.

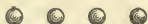


In the Eastern Counties, after a meeting, as we got opposite the gate of a big mansion, a large dog stood barking. I hesitated to go nearer, whereupon the owner, with whom I was to have late dinner, said, “Don’t be frightened, he’s wagging his tail. A dog that wags his tail never bites.” “Yes,” I replied, “you know that, and I know it, but are you sure the dog knows it?” I do believe my courage was not greatly admired, but candidly, I don’t like dogs.

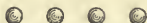
A Radical tormentor at a meeting in Lancashire opposed a speech of a candidate, and referring to the South African trouble declared: "There wouldn't be half so many killed, if there was no fighting."



A friend vouches for this story. Going round an agricultural constituency with the candidate—a young man—whose father (the Earl) had died recently, they called at a small village on a farmer who was marked "doubtful." "This is Lord —; you'll know him." "No, I don't," said the bluff old farmer. "At all events, you knew his father, the Earl of —?" "Yes, I knew him well; he was a good sort." "Well, then, you will surely vote for his son?" "I'm not so sure of that, for it isn't every cow that has a calf like hersel'!"



It was at a bye-election in Liverpool when Mr. Edward Whitley fought Lord Ramsay, the Home Ruler. A costermonger drove up to the door of one of the polling stations with his donkey and cart profusely decorated with the Liberal colours, and being an Irishman, the Radicals in the crowd cheered "like mad." When the man came out of the booth he quietly walked across to "Whitley's committee room," to the amazement of the bystanders, and on his return he was tackled by an officious personage, who pointed to the green ribbons on the donkey and then to the blue tie the man was found to be wearing. Getting into his cart, the coster fired his parting shot. He said: "Look here, you blokes; the explanation is this," pointing to the ribbons on the donkey: "He's a hass, and I'm a Conservative."

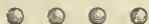


Lantern lectures have been the cause of some funny experiences. At Harrogate we were dealing with Irish evictions, and one of the pictures was entitled "Boycotting the babe unborn," and was an illustration of a poor man whose very little child had to be buried by its father in a grave he had had to dig, no priest or undertaker daring to associate with him. A few specially good slides had to be put in at the end as a variety, consisting of statues, etc. As I announced "Boycotting the babe unborn," the operator, in a mistake, put on a slide of "Venus returning from the bath," and was unable to see why the audience yelled so. Poor fellow!

At Barnsley, a friend, "J. S. W.," was suddenly called upon to work the lantern in the public hall. He miscalculated the distance, and, when the lights were lowered, could only get a picture about the size of a pocket handkerchief. A local gentleman volunteered to say a few words while the lantern was moved. The audience was getting unruly, the candidate came in unobserved, the lights were lowered, and the picture this time was at least twice the size of the sheet. The candidate was annoyed. He called out to the operator: "Why the —— didn't you measure the distance in the afternoon?" The operator, getting furious at the fun poked at him from the audience, and not knowing who had spoken, hotly retorted: "What the —— has it got to do with you?" Someone called on the audience to stand, and got the National Anthem started at so high a note that it was impossible to finish, and we all left greatly amused with an unexpected night's entertainment.

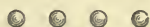


With a few friends, walking down the streets of Carnforth, after the close of the poll at the North Lonsdale election in 1895, I was hit across the neck by what proved to be an umbrella, and turning round hurriedly to strike back—discovered too late to avert the blow—that it was a woman. I never saw, and never heard of her before, and don't know to this day what was the reason of her unprovoked attack. A crowd gathered, a free fight commenced among the politicians, and I got on the floor, my knee being skinned. This is the only scar I have ever had, although in many political rows. It was really comic, after all, to see so many people in the hotel later on holding water bottles to their faces to take down the swellings.

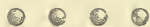


When in Ireland I came across a smart and amusing farmer who loudly talked of his poverty. I pointed out that he could not be so very poor as he had such a large number of ducks. "Shure," said Pat, who was carrying a pail of water, "they don't pay for their kape. I only get a shilling a pair for them." My companion said, "If you sent them to England, you could easily get six or eight shillings a pair." "Maybe I might, sor," said Pat, "and if I had this pail of water in hell I could get ten shillings a glass for it, but how the divil am I to get it there?"

The late Lord Randolph Churchill did me the honour to invite me to meet him at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham, when the National Union's conference was held in that town. It was no secret that he was actively engaged in trying to democratise and popularise the National Union. He asked me to canvass for votes among the delegates for his nominees, a list of them being publicly distributed. Because I declined to support one, and suggested another name, he was very annoyed. The name he objected to was, I believe, at the top of the poll, and I often regretted canvassing so much, as the gentleman in question has not proved a very loyal member of the party.



It is not generally known what an immense amount of trouble Lord Randolph took in the preparation of all his great speeches. I was secretary to the Conservative Working Men's League at Oldham, when his Lordship spoke in that town, and by appointment met him at the station. He gave me a number of envelopes to give to the reporters.—Each of them contained eight newspaper columns of his speech in type, and I was assured by the chief of the reporting staff on the "Chronicle" that there was not a material word omitted or added when the speech was delivered.



When I was agent for the Doncaster Division, I felt a strong desire to hear our M.P. (then a Radical), Mr. Walter Skirley, make a speech, and I agreed with the representative of the Conservative journal to accompany him to one of the opposition meetings. We drove to a village seven or eight miles from the headquarters, but arrived rather late. The meeting had commenced, the room was crowded to the door, and the M.P. was in the middle of his speech. My friend pushed forward into the thick of the crowd, pulled out a notebook, and began to make copious notes. Said the Radical member: "The Tory newspaper is like an assassin—it stabs me in the dark, misrepresents and distorts my speeches, and never sends a reporter to my meetings." A farm labourer at the rear end of the room shouted out, "That's a lie, for he's here nah." My friend, thus pointedly alluded to, stepped forward amidst much cheering, and the candidate, having played his trump card and lost, unblushingly expressed his pleasure at seeing him, and invited him to take a seat near the platform.

The succeeding speaker was the father of the M.P., who was again the candidate, and in the course of a fervid and impassioned address he informed his hearers that they had just listened to "the most statesmanlike speech that was ever delivered to an audience." This was "egg and milk" for my reporter friend, who did not fail to turn the occasion to advantage. The candidate won the election, but he did not prosper in political affairs, and his career had a most pathetic ending.



The same candidate, shortly after the incident previously alluded to, addressed an open-air meeting near the parish pump, at the pleasant village of Braithwell, pronounced "Brewell." There was a foldyard close by, and when he had succeeded in gaining the attention of his audience, and was making "points," a donkey in the aforesaid foldyard began to bray in a disconcerting and persistent manner. The candidate, with a wicked twinkle in his eye, turned towards that portion of his hearers where he suspected opposition, and said: "Gentlemen"—(a Radical always says "gentlemen" when he wants to be particularly nasty)—"don't take any notice of that; it's only a little Tory interruption." Quick as lightning came the retort from a Hodge-like man on the fringe of the crowd: "Nay, tha's mistaken; it's thee own brother." The people yelled with laughter at the witticism, and the candidate, hoist with his own petard, was some time before he recovered his self-possession and regained the attention of his hearers.

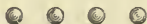


At a Doncaster election, when the result was declared by a greatly reduced majority, a Radical said, "We have beaten you again. You will never fight again, I suppose?" Good old Hill Smith, who was present, retorted, "Fight you again! We'll fight you till Hell freezes, and then we'll fight you on the ice!"



Another Irish grievance has been discovered. One day an Irishman was standing in Sackville Street, Dublin, admiring an ingenious contrivance for showing the time of day at the various capitals of the world; and after getting to understand its meaning, asked how it was the sun rose so many minutes earlier in London than Dublin? Not satisfied with the explanation he said, "Wait until we get Home Rule for Ireland, and we will have the sun rise as soon in Dublin as London."

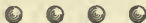
Mr. T. W. Russell, M.P., had one story I often heard him tell during the Home Rule discussions in the country:—"A gentleman went into the slums of London and in one room saw a family of seven people domiciled. There was only one bed in the room, and the gentleman asked whether they slept in that one bed. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, he said, "Well, I can understand you all lying there, but how do you manage when one wants to turn?" "Oh," chimed in a little boy, "father says 'turn' and we all turn." That is what the Gladstonians did when their political "father," the G.O.M., said turn on the Home Rule question, and round they went.



Mr. Joseph Arch, M.P., once called a friend of mine, who was heckling him (at Preesall, in Lancashire) "a beardless boy." Mr. Edmondson retorted: "That is a compliment for cleanliness, for you will always find in the rougher and uncultivated animals a preponderance of hair. For instance, yourself, Mr. Arch!"



My earliest recollection of hearing a lecture was being put on a gas bag as a weight, with other boys, for lime-light purposes. Someone, I won't say who, put a pin through the canvas, and the lecture was not of long duration. It does surprise a country audience, where they have no gas, to find us nowadays bringing our "two sorts of gas," for lantern-work, in iron tubes. I am a great believer in lantern lectures. Real pictures help to indelibly photograph on the minds of the audience the word pictures of the lecturer.

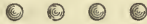


A farmer — my Chairman — was speaking on Agricultural Depression, and dealing with the labour questions, said: "Wheat was selling at 56 or 57 shillings a quarter in 1877. I could then more easily afford to pay you labourers 18s. a week, than I can now pay you 12s. with wheat at 25s. a quarter." An aged, wizand-looking man, who it appeared was one of his employees, said, "Did you pay us 18s. then?" The Chairman, a little nonplussed, "Perhaps not, because you must know that wages are fixed by the law of supply and demand." The old man, not at all taken aback, rejoined, "Well, aint the price of your wheat fixed in the same way?"

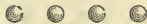
"I know what a horse is, and I know what a donkey is; it is only by a union of the two that I can make out what a Liberal Imperialist is," was the inelegant expression used at a meeting recently.



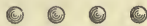
After stating my case at great length, and drawing up a telling indictment against the Liberal Government, I concluded once by asking the significant question, "How's that?" when a youthful cricketer in the audience spoiled the whole of my speech by ejaculating, "Out!"



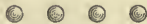
A sporting gentleman took the chair for me at a very small meeting in a very large room. The audience smiled when he said, "There is plenty of cover but very little game."



At a political potato pie supper, where the charge was sixpence, to include pie and one glass of beer, two young fellows attended. One of them, after having four plates of pie, and three glasses of beer, said to his friend in a serious tone, "I think everyone should come and encourage a thing of this sort. It's for a good cause!"

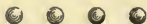


Suddenly called upon to speak at a dinner without preparation, the visitor said nervously, "I have been thinking how I was like Daniel, who when placed in the lion's den, said, 'Well there's one consolation, if there is to be any after dinner speaking to-night, I at any rate won't have any to do.'"



Colonel Chester Master, M.P., at Cirencester, dealing with certain Radical taradiddles about flogging in the Army, narrated how he had been flogged at school, and particularly on one occasion, when he was actually flogged for telling the truth. "It cured you!" roared a radiant Radical in the crowd. Prolonged laughter killed the malice of the interruption. Even the M.P. himself laughed until the tears came into his eyes.

A chairman, apologising for the small audience, said to the meeting: "I am so sorry that the rain kept all our best people away." So tactful!



Whenever possible when staying at an hotel I always make it a practice to stay in the commercial room for a variety of reasons. Chiefly because the ordinary commercial traveller is so entertaining and so sociable, and partly because you get better attention, and more reasonable charges than in the coffee room. It has often been a tough struggle to run the gauntlet of such questions: "What line are you in, sir?" "Have you had a good day?" "Did you put many calls in to-day?" "How does your firm treat you?" etc. The landlord, too, has been inquisitive, seeing no boxes or packages, and finding me "in" in the daytime and "out" at night. In my short career I have noticed a wonderful improvement in the "commercial gent." As usual, the survival of the fittest.

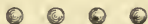


I once knew a very inquisitive commercial snubbed. He would persist in asking everybody their business. At last he turned to one little fellow (a political agent), and put half a dozen questions to him, all of which were answered in surly tones. At last he ended by saying, "And what particular line do you travel in?" "Railway tunnels," answered the worried gent. with a snap. There was a roar all over the room, and the tormentor ceased his questionings.

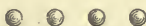


A very telling illustration was given at a meeting I attended at Hull, by Mr. Maxstead. He had heard two Liberal workers arguing about the good time coming when everything would be divided. Said one, "Do you know, Bill, it will come to £22 apiece?" The other replied, "Jack, you have two cows?" Jack said "Yes." "Well, your two cows are worth £14 apiece." "Yes, they are." "That is £28. You will have to give me £6 then to be fair, for I have none." Jack whistled, and said there had been a mistake somewhere.

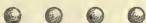
It is a little tantalising—and after all amusing—after the chairman has referred at great length to the speaker of the evening as “one of the best known platform men in the country,” to find him turning to the lecturer to inquire: “Let me see, sir, what is your name?” This occurred at one of my meetings in Dorsetshire.



Don't always believe what you see in print. Here is an illustration. I received a telegram from a brother agent asking me to take a meeting for him, as he was unwell. Of course I went, and gave the local reporter a lift. The meeting was badly attended, there was no enthusiasm, and all I did was to have a sort of chat with those present on political topics. I was amused to see in the newspaper on the Saturday a column report of what I may have said, although not so well, and a sympathetic note respecting the illness of my friend. Another newspaper is published at the other end of this particular division, and some wag sent me one, containing a report of the same meeting, printed on the same day, containing not my speech, but my friend's (who was not able to attend), on a different subject, saying there was a crowded audience, and that the meeting concluded with three cheers for the candidate.



I once had a chairman who was so drunk that he told the audience I was “only a little 'un, and they therefore mustn't expect much.” He then went to sleep—for which I was thankful.

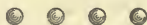


It is very awkward to be provided with a type-written lecture to read with a lantern show, when some of the slides are missing—the last borrower having broken some and omitted to send word. I was a witness to an embarrassing scene. The reader said, “I will now give you a portrait of Sir Archibald Hunter.” A pause—then the operator said, “It is not here, sir.” “Well, the next picture will be Sir Hector Macdonald.” (Applause.) A long wait. Then a whisper, “I can't find it sir.” “Never mind, put in Baden-Powell.” (Great enthusiasm.) Slide again missing. The lecturer, in sheer desperation: “For God's sake, put something on the sheet.” The operator found a portrait of an hotel at Pietermaritzberg, and the people screamed as a voice from the audience shouted, “I'll bet those three generals have gone in there for a drink.”

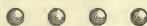
A very smart and popular skit, which had a wide circulation, was entitled:—

THE G.O.M.'s LAST CARD.

Of't have I shuffled, of't have played the knave,
In vain attempt a losing game to save;
I've played the deuce in foreign politics,
And lost in honours what I gained in tricks.
Sixes and sevens in Egypt I have played,
Then in despair turned to the rustic spade,
I've backed my partner, Joseph Arch's roughs—
Finessed! do what I will, I meet rebuffs.
I'm losing hearts all round, I've lost the clubs,
I've tried misdealing, still I lose my rubs;
I've turned my chair, called for another pack,
Hoping to bring my lost good fortune back.
I'm quite prepared my queen to sacrifice,
Tho' that, perhaps, would be too high a price.
I've still one card—the Tories to befool
To gain a point—at last I'll try Home Rule.
"Stop!" cried John Bull, with honest anger choking,
"Turn out the rascal. William, you're revoking!"



One of the noisiest meetings I ever attended was at Birmingham, along with the late Colonel Fred Burnaby. The audience howled and yelled, but the gallant colonel lit a cigar, sat on the edge of the chairman's table, never uttered a word, but smiled in a most provoking manner and thoroughly tired the audience, waiting until they had shouted themselves hoarse. He then quietly thanked them for permitting him to indulge, and gradually got their entire attention, until by the time I got up to speak the meeting was as quiet as a veritable quakers' gathering.



Mr. H. J. Pettifer, the popular Primrose League lecturer, tells a good story at his own expense. Visiting his native place near Northampton, he conceived the idea of hunting up his pedigree. He went through the Parish Church records and found Pettifers in abundance in the death register, but no Pettifers in the births or christening register. He appealed to the old clerk for an explanation, and the reply came, "All your people were Baptists and declined to come to Church when alive, but we caught 'em all at last when they died!"

Old Sir John Astley was a funny speaker. I heard him at Welbeck Abbey, in 1892, say: "I think the G.O.M. has his work cut out this time. It reminds me of Noah's Ark. You all remember old friend Noah bustling into the ark with his relatives, and the birds and the animals. It was a rummish mixture. How long did they stop? As I understand it from the old Book, only about forty days, and then the Ark bumped against Mount Ararat. Mr. Gladstone, I think, will have to turn out very soon, because the party he is in with will lead him such a devil of a life. (Laughter.) It was a rummish mixture when I was in Parliament; but such a conglomeration of atoms never before existed as we see now, and I hope when the G.O.M. comes to grief, I hope he won't say to his animals, as Noah did, 'Go forth and people the earth,' for there's too many of that sort as it is."

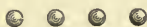


I have received scores of insulting postcards, but never publish them. The Rev. H. M. Kennedy, Vicar of Plumpton, published a sample he once received, saying, "To the Rev. Satan, Plumpton Vicarage, Cumberland,—You damned scoundrel. I hope your Bishop will unfrock you. If he does not, what is the good of having a Bishop? But, frocked or unfrocked, I hope the devil will get you. If he does not, then I say what's good of having a devil?"

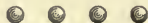


Ridiculing the wonderful stories of what a Liberal candidate had done, a speaker at a meeting I attended told this Yankee story. A Revolutionary soldier running for Congress said, "Fellow citizens, I have fought and bled for my country. I helped to whip the British and Indians. I have slept on the field of battle with no other covering than the canopy of heaven. I have walked over frozen ground till every footstep was marked with blood." Just then an affected voter got up and inquired: "Did you say that you had fought the British and the Indians?" "Yes." "Did you say that you had slept on the ground while serving your country without a cover?" "Yes, I did." "Did you say you had followed the enemy over frozen ground till every footstep was covered with blood?" "Yes," exultingly cried the speaker. "Well, then, said the tearful elector, 'I'll be d——a if I don't think you've done enough for your country; I shall vote for the other man!'"

Mr. Pettifer once travelled all the way from London to the extreme north of England to be the chief speaker at a Primrose League meeting. The secretary, after a lot of hunting, was discovered, and explained the programme—first, chairman's address, then a song, then a violin solo, then a lantern lecture, then another song, then conjuring, then a lot more items. "Yes, yes, but where do I come in?" "Oh, you are so popular, the people will all wait for you. We want you to speak at the end." "What time is the next train to London?" said Mr. Pettifer, and finding he could just catch it, he went straight back without speaking.



A reverend gentleman at a meeting said: "If he had Balfour before him it would be hard to keep from giving him a kick that would send his body to the worms, and his soul he knew not where. If he did, however, he would not know what to do with his boots. He would not have them contaminated by contact with such a scoundrel."



Being requested to open a debate in a public house on a Sunday night, and objecting, I was shown a bill announcing that a collier on the preceding Sunday lectured there on "The agency of fire in the formation of the planets, and the action of radiation of heat and of the solidification of oceans in the death of the world." The newspaper report told us this learned man, who was not scupulous, as I was, although apparently a far superior person, talked to his friends of "the doctrines of Zoroaster, Heles, Democritus, Epicurus, Plato, Aristotle, Hindoo Philosophy, Descartes, Brewster, and La Place."



This is a funny world, and strange are the ways of the people in it. A gentleman who was to preside at a lantern lecture would not speak until the lantern was fixed and the limelight put on, although I protested that both the chairman's speech and part of my address had best be given with the "lights up." Afterwards he told me, "in confidence," "he was wondering how his diamond studs sparkled with the limelight full on them?"

I begged a copy of the following extract from "Alice in Wonderland," from a speaker who effectively quoted it to pour ridicule on unfounded charges made against Mr. Chamberlain:—

"There is more evidence to come yet, please your Majesty," said the White Rabbit, jumping up in a great hurry, "this paper has just been picked up."

"What is in it?" said the Queen.

"I have not opened it yet," said the White Rabbit; "but it seems to be a letter written by the prisoner to—somebody."

"It must have been that," said the King, "unless it was written to nobody, which is not usual, you know."

"Who is it directed to?" said one of the jurymen.

"It isn't directed at all," said the White Rabbit, "in fact, there is nothing written on the outside." He unfolded the paper as he spoke, and added, "it isn't a letter, after all—it's a set of verses."

"Are they in the prisoner's handwriting?" asked another of the jury.

"No, they're not," said the White Rabbit; "and that's the queerest thing about it."

The jury all looked puzzled.

"He must have imitated somebody else's hand," said the King.

The jury all brightened up again.

"Please, your Majesty," said the Knave, "I didn't write it at all, and they cannot prove I did. There's no name signed at the end of it."

"If you didn't sign it, that makes the matter worse. You must have meant some mischief, or else you would have signed your name as an honest man."

"That proves his guilt," said the Queen.

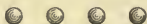
"That's the most important piece of evidence we've heard yet," said the King, rubbing his hands, "so let the jury now consider their verdict."

"No, no," said the Queen, "Sentence first, verdict afterwards."

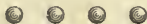


I remember being in Southwark when Mr. Arthur Cohen and Professor Rogers were fighting Mr. Edward Clarke and Mr. Catley. At one of the meetings, Mr. Cohen, in stating his claims to the favourable consideration of the electors, laid great stress on the announcement, "Gentlemen, my father was a Baron." "What a pity your mother wasn't barren, too," exclaimed an opponent, amid laughter.

Peter Rylands, M.P. for Burnley, was once boasting that he had in that session asked 45 questions of the Government. Instead of the expected applause, great laughter was caused by the remark from one of his constituents, "What an ignorant old devil you must be to ask so many questions!"



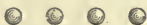
Perhaps the breeziest speaker I ever met was Lord Charles Beresford. It was a treat to hear him tell the story about a Lord of the Admiralty who received a report, couched in technical phrases, of disaster to a ship, and resented it as simply bad language. His point was to show what incompetent and unfit men are put in Government offices.



Another story of Lord Charles' is the one of the civilian Lord who, looking over a chart, and finding that a ship's return course passed, within two inches space on the chart, an island where castaway sailors were supposed to be sheltered, wanted to know why it could not call and relieve them. The two inches, Lord Charles explained, amid laughter, meant a distance at sea of a thousand miles.



On the Garstang and Knott End Railway, where the guard comes round among the passengers, as the train travels, selling the tickets, a lecturer once pointed out to me a notice posted up, saying, "This company does not bind itself to carry more passengers than the train will hold."

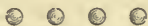


Lord Neave, in his "Songs and Verse," describes a conversation between a working man and his employer:—

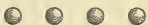
"Pray, what's this 'Local Option' Bill
That some folks rave about?
I can't with all my pains and skill
Its meaning quite make out."

"Oh, it's a little simple Bill
That seeks to pass incog.,
To permit me, to prevent you,
From having a glass of grog."

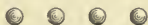
Only once have I really been completely cornered with a questioner—that is, questions so closely followed up that it was not safe for me to reply. I twice asked my tormentor to repeat his question while I puzzled my brains for a safe retort. It came by accident. I blurted out, “Oh, that’s too easy, ask me another!” and with a broad grin, the gentleman assisted me out of the dilemma by falling into the trap and asking me “another!”



“You should take your wives wherever you go, you working men,” said the lady speaker at a Primrose meeting. “It would be rather awkward when you go to get shaved,” mused one of the audience.

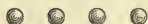


After a lecture a man who was permitted to ask a question proceeded to make a speech. The chairman, interrupting, said, “You are a little out of order, sir.” Quite innocently the man said, “No, sir; I never was in better health in my life.”

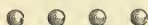


Peculiar are the ways of speakers. An eloquent Irish friend I have often met, who can sing a good song, or play a good concertina, has a habit of always playing for a dramatic finish. At a Lancashire bye-election each night he would decline to leave his hotel without his Union Jack, which he carefully placed in his coat tail pocket. Talking of the might, and power, and importance of the Empire, he would suddenly startle the audience by some such declaration as “It was in Cuba! A poor Englishman was charged with some trivial offence. He was tried, condemned, and sentenced to be shot. His friends appealed in vain. The prisoner was taken into the court yard, a body of soldiers were marched out, commanded to load their rifles, and as these were raised, and the order was about to be given to fire, in rushed the English Consul, and throwing the Union Jack across his breast (suiting the action to the word), and standing before the prisoner, he cried, ‘Fire if you dare!’” This always “fetched the audience,” and he would then pour forth such a flood of eloquence about the Union Jack and the Empire, as on almost all occasions aroused boisterous enthusiasm.

A very happy retort was given in my hearing by a clergyman at a meeting, in reply to a taunt from the audience, "What is the Tory creed?" He replied: "To honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her; to submit ourselves to all our governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters; to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters; to hurt nobody by word or deed; to be true and just in all our dealings; to bear no malice or hatred in our hearts; to keep our hands from picking and stealing, and our tongues from evil speaking, lying, and slandering; not to covet or desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour truly to get our own living, and to do our duty in that state of life which it shall please God to call us."



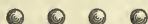
An exuberant Radical said to an enthusiastic Tory, "Once again, George, we have licked you," omitting to mention that the majority had been greatly reduced. "Licked us, have you? Why, we've killed hundreds of your forces, and taken scores of prisoners. What the dickens more did you expect?" retorted the Tory.



A working man at a Lincoln meeting scored over the railing and braying opponents who were present in force. He remarked: "Now then, gentlemen, that will do nicely; but I can get a creature with two legs more than any of you possess, that can make that noise to far greater perfection than any of you are doing."

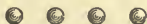


There was a miserably small audience, and the lecturer intended to commence jocularly, observing, "Gentlemen, which will you have, the lecture or drinks?" He was a little taken aback, but after all delighted, when they preferred the wet to the dry.

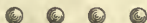


"I could have made a far better speech than that if I had a mind, but I hadn't a mind," said a nervous man in proposing a vote of thanks.

A mean man played a mean trick on me. In his division for five nights on a first visit, I proposed (to myself) to make the same speech each night, as it was up-to-date, and dealt with the only topic then prominent—Home Rule. The third night, at the most important meeting, the person in question put himself up to speak first, and proved he had a retentive memory, for he delivered the very speech I had taken so much pains to prepare. But I flatter myself I came equal with him.



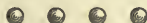
A candidate was asked if he approved of "the Deceased Wife's Sisters Bill?" He replied, "I am so satisfied with the specimen of my mother-in-law's family I have at present that I have no wish to see her place occupied by any of her immediate relations."



Some people can never repeat a joke. The late agent for Skipton, trying to tell a story he had heard at a meeting, bungled it by saying, "The man said the horse had two faults. It was difficult to catch, and when it was caught, it was not worth catching!"

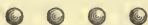


When assisting in the Newmarket election I heard this yarn. A certain young curate had accepted a curacy in an agricultural district. He had very little in common with his parishioners, most of whom were farmers, and for some time could not fail to notice that he was not exactly popular among them. One day, however, to his intense delight, a farmer came to him in the vestry just before the service began, and asked him if he would devise that the prayers of the congregation might be offered up for Kitty Grey. The young curate, delighted at finding that at last he was getting into touch with his farmer parishioners, complied with the request. For several Sundays he solemnly announced that "the prayers of the congregation are desired for Kitty Grey," and then one Sunday the farmer came to him before the service and whispered in his ear: "Ye needn't pray for Kitty Grey no more, sir; she's won the handicap."

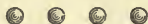


It was a District Council election where one of the candidates said, "A great many people are dying this year who never died before."

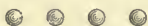
A well-known Radical M.P. relates the following story of a man who had undergone an operation in Africa, in which a portion of his brain was removed. The surgeon met him afterwards in England, and asked him, "By the way, would you like that piece of brain again that I took?" "No," said he, "I'm in the War Office now, and shall not require it."



Mr. Augustine Birrell at a Liberal meeting in Scarborough, during the Preston bye-election, referring to Mr. Hodge, the Liberal candidate, said in Chartist times there was a famous election at Preston. Orator Hunt, a great man in his day, was returned against the Stanley of his time, and Lord Derby was so angry at the insult to his family that he pulled down his town house in that place, and, as if effectually to work the ruin of Preston, he actually sold his cockpit to the Methodists.

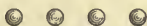


The Irish friend referred to before, was asked how he accounted for certain recent Tory victories, and he told the story that Archbishop Whateley at a clerical dinner in Dublin asked gravely if any of the clergy present from the country districts could explain why white sheep eat more grass than black sheep. Some questioned the fact, but Whateley assured them that it was a fact well established. One or two then attempted to account for such a fact. "No," said Whateley; "the real reason why white sheep eat so much more grass than black sheep is—because there are so many more of them!"

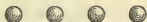


One of the smartest and most apt retorts ever heard was at a public meeting addressed by Mr. Henry George, the well-known political economist. Mr. George was lecturing at Cambridge, and the audience was a distinctly hostile one. But discussion was invited, and at the extreme back of the hall a Japanese student got up and made a brief speech which was quite inaudible to those on the platform. Mr. George at the conclusion of the Jap's remarks rose and said, "Would the gentleman who has just spoken step up here on the platform; in the position in which he stands I cannot hear him" "I heard him plainly enough," shouted a rough fellow amongst the audience. "I daresay," quietly replied Mr. George, "your ears are much longer than mine."

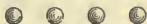
A candidate for Parliament says that when canvassing a county constituency with some members of his committee they stopped at the home of a farmer, and found he was not at home. They, however, saw his wife, and one of the committeemen said to her, "Madame, is your husband a Liberal or a Unionist?" "Well," she replied, "I'll tell you about him. He goes about a good deal, and when he is with Liberals he is a Conservative; when he is with Conservatives he is a Liberal; but when he is about here he is a darned nuisance."



Two Scotch political agents were discussing the doings of their respective members. Said one, "Weel, he sent us some fine birds last year." "Man," replied the other, laughingly, "that was bribery." "But," said the first speaker, "we could na' eat them—the pair we had were so high we just threw them awa'." "Worse still!" quoth his friend, "that was bribery and corruption."

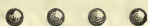


Queer reasons are given for voting. At a municipal election in Lancaster a good (?) Conservative was twitted with voting for the Liberal candidate, and his explanation was, "I don't like his politics, but you must admit Tom Wilkinson's tuppenny pies are good ones!"

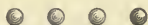


A good story, and one worthy of much telling, is that which is going the rounds of the clubs in London, and which has for its hero the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour. As everyone knows, Mr. Balfour is unmarried, yet withal there is no greater favourite with the fair sex than the popular Leader of the House of Commons. In the course of a conversation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer the question of new taxation came up, when Mr. Austen Chamberlain suggested a tax on bachelors. "I suggest," said Mr. Chamberlain, "that the tax be increased for every ten years of unmarried life by a certain per cent. to be determined on." Mr. Balfour looked aghast. "Oh, by the way," went on the Chancellor, "why, you would have to pay almost £40 a year at that rate." "Yes," replied Mr. Balfour, with his sweetest smile, "but I think it's worth it."

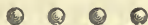
Mr. Winston Churchill will have many interesting things to tell in the biography of Lord Randolph Churchill, which he is some day to give us. Among the papers which he has at his disposal is a mysterious Budget which Lord Randolph had prepared and never presented. Sir Algernon West, into whose keeping the document was delivered, has said, "What that Budget was cannot yet be told; but it may be fairly said that it far exceeded in importance any Budget since Mr. Gladstone's great performance in 1860." The story of its making will not be less interesting than that as to its contents. "I wish you would put those figures plainly so that I can understand them," he said to the clerk who laid some data before him. He had done his best, and reduced them to decimals, the clerk mildly protested. "Oh! I never could understand what those d—d dots meant," said the master of the nation's finances.



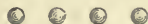
Perorations are responsible for many jumbles. Here is one. "We will march forth with our guns on our shoulders, and plough the mighty deep, so that our gallant ship shall sail proudly over the land."



Some working men—Midland Railway men—were discussing the Fiscal problem. One man objected that Mr. Chamberlain was not a moral man, and even his pals kicked against that statement. His answer was, "Is he not a married man?" "Yes." "Well, you notice the papers, he never goes anywhere without taking that impudent hussy Jesse Collings with him!"

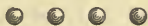


The late Colonel Eyre, when M.P. for Gainsborough, had this question put to him at one of his annual meetings. "Is it true that you consider an unvaccinated child a source of danger to the community. If it is, will you please propose a vote of censure upon the Creator for making unvaccinated children?"



When Mr. J. C. Bolton (L.) and Sir W. Edmonstone (C.) were contesting Stirlingshire, a collier asked the old Admiral, "Would he disestablish the Kirk o' Scotland?" and like a blunt old salt, Sir William said with emphasis, "I'll see you d—d first!"

Mr. Roebuck, M.P. for Sheffield, had this question put to him in Paradise Square, "Will you vote for reducing the salary of the Lord Lieutenant?" He replied, "No"—(Conservative cheers)—"I would abolish it altogether"—(Radical cheers).



I heard a good story of the late Mr. Childers, M.P., when he was Secretary for War, from a gentleman who knew him well. One day Mr. Childers went into his office on a surprise visit and found a swellish-looking young man leaning against the mantelshelf, with his hands in his trousers pockets. Eyeing each other, the following dialogue ensued:—

"Do you always work as hard as this?"

"Not always."

"I suppose you could do a little more work if you had it?"

"Perhaps."

"Then why the devil don't you do what you have to do?"

"Don't want to."

"Do you know who I am, sir?"

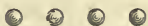
"No; and don't care."

"I am Mr. Childers, the Secretary of State for War," yelled the irate Minister, "and I'll have you removed."

"Can't."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Why, I am only the man that comes from Bennett's to wind up the clocks."

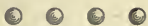


The same friend told me this:—

Workman: "We've come to work again, if we can have it, sir?"

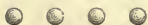
Master: "Getting tired of being out on strike, I suppose?"

Workman: "It aint that, sir; but the leaders of the strike struck for higher salary last night, leaving us between two fires, sir."

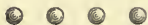


Mr. C. F. Hammond, Conservative M.P. for Newcastle-on-Tyne, was a J.P. of long experience. At one of his election meetings a rough cried, "Get your hair cut, Charlie," causing a laugh. Old Charlie fixed his glasses, glared at the man, and replied, "My dear friend, if I am not mistaken, I have been the means of having your hair cut before to-day."

Although a Liberal the late Bishop Fraser was my ideal man. I was once at a meeting where a speaker in his presence told this story:—The Bishop, as you know, is very fond of children. One day, going through a poor part of his diocese—Ancoats, in Manchester—he saw two urchins putting the finishing touches to what appeared to be a mud house. His Lordship stopped. Patting them on the head, he asked what they were making. "A church," said one. "Oh, yes, I see," he said; "that is the entrance door, I suppose, and these are the pews; and I see you have even got a pulpit. Very good, my boys, very good. But where is the parson?" The other lad replied, "We hadn't enough muck left to make a parson!!" Although I remember the story, I forget the application.



A nervous, fidgety old chairman, introducing me at a meeting, said: "In—the—immediate—few—days—gone by—at present." What with blowing his nose, taking a pinch of snuff, having a drink of water, moving his papers about, etc., he took up a long time. But it has always remained a puzzle to find out what he intended to say.

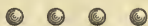


Some speakers never want a water bottle. I always do, and it has often been a source of amusement to see the chairman lay his watch down on the table and immediately knock the water over it. I remember a chairman asking me in the ante-room, "Do you drink water?" I replied, "When I can get nothing else." I had never noticed anything being done out of the ordinary, but when taking a drink in the middle of my speech, a thought struck me that I was poisoned, and I made no secret of spitting all over the place, the chairman explaining to the astonished audience that I was wasting a glass of the very best whisky he had especially sent for, without having notified me of it.

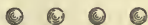


Another time I jocularly said I was "So dry" I could "blow the top off" some beer. Five minutes later a lad solemnly walked up the room, on to the platform, with a quart jug full of beer, saying, "Mr. Riley sent this to quench your thirst!"

The longest chairman's speech I ever heard was in Herefordshire. I was honoured with a live M.P. in the chair. He took up close on two hours, dealing with his favourite topic, before introducing me to give my lecture!

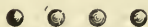


Mr. Leonard Courtney, the Free Trade candidate for West Edinburgh in opposition to Sir Lewis McIver, is nothing if not a "serious politician," but on inspiration he has a happy way of tackling hecklers, of whom he met many tough ones at Liskeard. Once he was asked, "Is the hon. member in favour of marriage with a deceased wife's sister?" Said Mr. Courtney, whose charming and accomplished wife was sitting on the platform, as she does in West Edinburgh, "Are you married?" "Yes." "Has your wife any sisters?" "Yes." "Is your wife here?" "No, if 'er had bin I shudn't ev asked 'e, no fear." "Well, my wife is here, and she has sisters, so I don't propose to answer you."

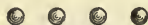


Mr. "Bob" Martin ("Ballihooley"), speaking at Kirkby Lonsdale with Captain Bagot, M.P., said he would like to tell them a story which explained his objection. There was a village in Ireland which had a race meeting once a year. Of course that meeting was illegal; it went without saying. (Laughter.) It was contrary to the rules of the United Hunt or whatever it might be. The prizes given were too small. (Laughter.) At the meeting they chose a judge, a good fellow until after luncheon—(renewed laughter)—and he sat at his box on one occasion. There was a great race about five in the afternoon between a black pony and a white one. No one knew which was going to win. The judge had gone to sleep, but he was sitting there all right and the race went on. One cried, "The black pony is winning," and another said, "The white pony is winning." As they passed the judge's post the people turned to the judge and said, "Who has won." The judge looked up sleepily and said, "Who has done what?" (Laughter.) "Who has won?" said the public. The judge then saw the black and white ponies going by together, and putting his hand out said, "I give it against the piebald." (Loud laughter.) The reason he (the speaker) was opposed to the Liberal Imperialists was because he gave the verdict against piebalds. (Cheers.)

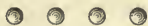
Supporting a resolution pledging the meeting to work, he remembered an occasion when two Irishmen slept in two beds in one room, with one bottle of whisky between them. (Laughter.) And they made a resolution that they would drink half the bottle that night, and leave the other half for the morning, and they went to bed. It was not very long before Patrick woke up with a great thirst on him. He got out of bed, and quietly walked round the table, and he emptied the half of the bottle. (Laughter.) Then he went back to bed again. And he listened, and listened, and heard Mike getting out of bed and crawling round the table, and he said, "Hullo, Mike; what are you looking for?" "Nothing," said Mike. "Oh," said Patrick, "if you get your hand on the bottle you will find it." (Loud laughter.) Why had he told them that story? Because he wanted them to see the application of it; that the resolution, however good, was of no value unless it was stringently observed and strictly performed.



Political orator: "No, gentlemen—I tell you that if you want a thing done well you must always do it yourself." Voice from the crowd: "How about getting your hair cut?"

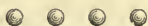


I recently heard the chairman of an election meeting tell this old wheeze of a Yorkshire poacher whose tackle had been found near the scene of his capture, but who pleaded that the things were not his. His lawyer took up the plea and won the case. "I suppose I go for good?" asked the poacher, turning to the magistrate as he left the dock. "Yes," was the answer. "And I can't be browt up again for this 'ere offence?" "No," said the magistrate. "You're sartin?" the man exclaimed in some excitement; and he was assured that there was no doubt at all. "Then," said he, "I'd thank you, your worship, to kindly give me back my line an' my ferret!"

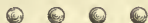


A meeting of the Irish League was held in Edinburgh, and a miserable little speck of people assembled, hardly visible in the big hall. The members were inclined to be sad about it, when Mr. Tapley, in the chair, came to the rescue. "It's not that the meeting is so small, but the hall is so big." There would have been lots and lots of people there if they'd met, say, in an ante-room.

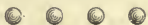
Of the late Lord Salisbury's sardonic humour, stories are numerous. This one was perpetrated nearly ten years ago, at Cardiff, where the great statesman had gone to speak in defence of the menaced Welsh Church. At the public luncheon, the late Sir Edward Hill pointed to a church decked in violets that formed one of the floral decorations, and said, "That is the church which your lordship is to defend." "You mean," replied Lord Salisbury, slyly, "that the church must be kept inviolate!"



Of Mr. W. J. Bryan, late candidate for the Presidency of the United States, the story is told that after stumping Nebraska for the Governorship he was defeated, but not before he had said hard things about his opponent. Soon afterwards he was invited to speak at Omaha, and to his surprise the Governor, his late opponent, was in the chair. When the time came for the Governor to introduce Mr. Bryan, he said "I have the honour to introduce Mr. W. J. Bryan, who"—he leaned over to Bryan and whispered, "Do you sing?" and receiving a "No," added, "who will give an address." He did feel small.

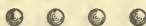


The Earl of Albemarle, who met with a serious accident the other day, stood for Birkenhead a good many years ago, when he was Viscount Bury, and won the election, mainly, it is said, by reason of an audacious but a perfectly proper placard. At that time it was said "the flowing tide" was going with Mr. Gladstone. Viscount Bury's placard ran as follows: "Men of Birkenhead, vote for Bury, and dam the flowing tide." He won hands down.



They were rival candidates for a vacant seat in Parliament, and they smiled patronisingly when they met together in a railway carriage. "My good sir," said the Radical, kindly, "whatever on earth has prompted you to oppose me in the forthcoming election? You haven't a chance to win; it's a donkey to a strawberry against you." "Indeed," said the Unionist, dubiously, "that certainly doesn't sound very encouraging, but perhaps you wouldn't mind apologising for the liberty you've taken in calling me a strawberry." And you could have heard a fly sneeze in the awkward silence that followed the last remark.

Some people are so conceited! I once had a glorious meeting to speak to, and was proud of the reception accorded me as I went on the platform, and said so to the chairman, as a young lady was singing a song. The chairman missed my point, for he humbly remarked, "Yes, I was confidently expecting you would have a full house, when I consented to preside for you."



Dr. Aubrey, Liberal candidate for the Horncastle Division of Lincolnshire, had queer ideas of fighting. He issued a handbill, with his name attached, headed:—

THE TORY CREED.

"I believe in monopoly, privilege, and exclusiveness; in vested and class interests; in robbery, corruption, intimidation, and bribery; in resistance to popular rights and liberties as long as possible; and in the absolute right to do as I choose.

"I especially believe in swagger and bluster towards other nations; in keeping down or bamboozling the vulgar crowd; in the greatest good to the smallest number, which comprises the select, sacred, and superior race known as Tories of the blue blood."

A REJOINDER.

I wrote, unsuccessfully, suggesting that the Tories, as a set off, should issue this extract from Mr. J. A. Froude's "The English in the West Indies":—

"Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Radical faith.

"And the Radical faith is this: All men are equal and the voice of one is as the voice of another.

"And whereas one man is wise, and another foolish, and one is crooked, yet in this suffrage none is greater or less than another. The vote is equal, the dignity co-eternal.

Truth is one and right is one, yet right is right because the majority so declare it, and justice is justice because the majority so declare it.

"And if the majority affirm one thing to-day, that is right; and if the majority affirm the opposite to-morrow, that is right.

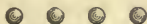
"Because the will of the majority is the ground of right, and there is no other, etc., etc.

"This is the Radical faith, which, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, he is a Tory, and an enemy to the State, and without doubt shall perish everlastingly."

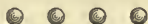
An inebriated Radical, on reaching home at 2 a.m., was met by his snarling wife, who opened the door:—

Inebriated: It's no use grumbling, my dear; I've been detained by politics.

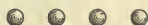
Snarler: Polly who? you wretch!



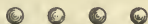
"Have you heard the news? Labouchere's dead," said one Conservative to another. "Nonsense; I happen to know he isn't." "How do you know?" "Well, I've just seen him, and he says he isn't." "Bah! Labouchere will say anything!"



A friend tells me he overheard two labouring men in a polling booth talking. Said one, "Who are ta goin' to vote for?" "I don't know," said the other; "Who art ta?" "Ah shall vote for t' chap on th' top o' t' paper, and if tha puts a cross against th' bottom name we're bound to be reight."

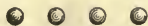


A Yankee once moved a vote of thanks to me, and arguing that Englishmen were not patriotic enough, he grew eloquent about America, and in his enthusiasm, he cried, "Who was the first real man—why George Washington!" "I said jocularly, "What about Adam?" He completely shut me up, and caused great merriment by ejaculating, "Oh, he was a foreigner!"

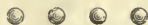


After the meeting, talking over American politics, he told this story:—"A friend of his who had waited years for a post office appointment, owned a very fine dog. One day after a run the dog sat in the porch with his tongue hanging out. 'That's a fine dog,' said a friend. 'You're right, he is,' said the man proudly. 'What makes his tongue stick out that way?' 'Politics-' 'Why, sir, that dog knows Roosevelt is elected, and he knows I want a post office, and he's got his tongue out already to begin licking the stamps.'"

He told me this also:—"An American politician, speaking of his opponent, said: 'There is a theory pretty well substantiated by facts that a death and a birth always occur simultaneously, and that the spirit of the dead man enters the body of the new-born child. I have carefully investigated the record of my opponent and I find that when he was born nobody died.'"

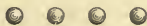


I cut this quaint advertisement out of a Chester newspaper:—"The jawbone and teeth of the beast that attacked Mr. Gladstone are now on view at C. H. Senior's, Highgate, Oakes Hotel, who has received them from Mr. Shaw, formerly of the above hotel." The man who sent me the paper said, "Samson slew three hundred Philistines with the jawbone of an ass; Paul fought with beasts at Ephesus, but it remained for the G.O.M. to conquer the sacred cow."

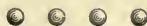


My longest speech was delivered in the Stamford Division. The energetic agent, Mr. Ablewhite, commanded me, along with another friend, to go to a Radical village where it was thought important Mr. Cust, the Conservative candidate, should have the last word, the night before the election. The committee solemnly sat to receive the candidate, and were horror-struck to find he "might be late," as he had about fifteen other meetings. The way they eyed the two diminutive speakers was amusing to me, and disgusting to my friend. I demanded we should start the meeting, as it was past time, but for a time no one moved, and no one spoke. Eventually, one man ventured to ask if I had ever spoken before at a meeting, and could I speak—say for fifteen minutes. At this my friend went into hysterics—quite forgot how wild he was two moments earlier—declared I was the best speaker in the country, that I should electrify the audience, and if necessary could "go on" all night, at which I then had an uncontrolled fit of laughter. We did at last get on the platform. My friend spoke first, and "I held the fort" for considerably over two hours and a half, when Mr. Cust, who had had a fearful heckling at some of his meetings, arrived. It was comical to note as someone left the room I would say, "In conclusion," thinking he had gone to greet Mr. Cust. As he came back wiping the froth off his mouth from having a drink, I would remark, "Just another idea strikes me," etc., etc. It is only fair to say the chairman invited us to his (farm) house to have supper, remarking, "I have heard many big speakers, but this little Bottomley is a monster."

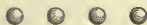
The "Express," referring to Sir Gilbert Parker, the novelist, becoming Conservative candidate for Gravesend, said, "He is one of the many journalists who have given up newspaper work for a more elaborate kind of fiction."



At Coventry one night a man came in the club declaring he had heard two drunken men talking. One said, "Three cheers for Old Ireland and Home Rule." The other said, "Three cheers for Hell." "All right," said Paddy, "everybody should stick up for his own country."



At Plymouth I had the misfortune to use an expression which was twisted to mean something different to what was intended. It was in the Fair Trade agitation days. Mr. John Bright was appealed to, and he wrote a letter which also could be read in two lights. When I arrived at Wellingborough three days later the local Liberals distributed this letter broadcast, and the Tory leaders, afraid of a row, advised postponing the meeting and declined to go on the platform. I went and faced the howling mob, and found the place so hot that the mercury tried to climb out of the barometer. By dint of good humour and perseverance, I managed to get a hearing, and explained what had happened at Plymouth, and apologised for any misunderstanding, and offered to divide the time in speaking with any man the audience cared to nominate. The row was in reality broken up before it properly commenced. I secured a hearing, and was awarded a vote of thanks, supported by Liberals, and had no reason to thank those who deserted me when I wanted assistance.



A well-known Radical lecturer tells this story to illustrate what he calls Tory stupidity. "Gas had just been introduced into a village, but the lights were not steady. An inspector promised to have the matter put right. "You can do what you like," replied the man, "but when yon box (meaning the gas meter) is empty we'll ha' no moor."

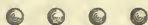
The funniest grievance I ever heard at an election was when a man came out of the polling booth, evidently in trouble. It appeared he had torn up his ballot paper and stamped on it, declaring he went there to vote yellow, and "how can I vote yellow with a blue pencil?"



The same speaker told the story of a deputation waiting upon an old gentleman and asking him to become a candidate for the Town Council. "Will there be any pay?" "Oh, no; nothing but the honour of the position." "Honour be danged. I've always been taught whenever tha' does owt for nowt do it for tha' sel'."

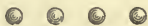


It is not always wise to be "too cock-sure." At Northampton Mr. Shaw, the election agent, published a telegram from "The Social and Democratic Club" in support of Mr. Germaine, the Conservative candidate. With other Conservatives, I attended an open-air meeting, addressed by Dr. Aveling. He denounced the Tories for publishing a so-called telegram from "The Social Democratic Federation," saying he knew they had not received one. I contradicted him, saying I had seen it. (Note how he used "Federation" for "Club" without my seeing the difference.) He demanded my name, which was freely given, and the day after I received a letter from a great firm of London solicitors demanding an instant apology. I never apologised, nor did Dr. Aveling, for neither of us apparently realised his mistake for some time. We had the telegram from the "Club" and not "Fédération," and we consequently were both wrong. I never knew before that they were different organisations.

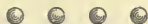


The late Mr. W. E. Briggs, of Blackburn, was one of the most amusing characters I ever met among Liberal M.P.'s. The Marquis of Hartington, it is said, had never been seen to laugh at a political meeting, but Mr. Briggs made him laugh heartily with this story:—There was a Blackburn man going down a street, and he popped his head into a shop where they sold everything, kept by an old lady who stood behind the counter with a little red shawl on her shoulders and two roses and a sunflower in her cap. He said, "Missis, han yo ony red herring?" and she said "Aye." "Well, han yo ony butter-milk?" She said, "Aye." "Well," said he, "Let 'em sup."

Addressing a noisy meeting he once said: I suppose there are some here present who remember the days when almost each household brewed its own beer. Well, one day there was a mouse got on to the edge of the mug, and was so attracted by the liquor inside that it fell into what is called a "pot o' liquor." The cat coming in, the mouse said, "Poo me eauwt." "Neaw, I shan't," said the cat. "Ah, but," he said, "if tha'll poo me eauwt thou's ha me." Well, the cat assisted the mouse, and took him out of the pot of liquor, whereupon the wily little animal shook himself free, and bolted into a hole. "Come," said the cat, "that's not fair; didn't ta say, if I poo'd thee eauwt, I mud ha' tha." "Aye," said the mouse, safe in its hole, "I did; but then theaw knows I wor i' drink." Now if any of those gentlemen at the bottom of the room have given the Conservative party a promise to vote for them, let them say, "I did; but I wor i' drink."

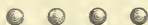


A man once told him this story. He said:—A fellow came to me and asked me the following conundrum, "Why is my wife unlike the devil?" I said, "I don't know, perhaps she isn't." He replied, "Oh, yes, she is. Scripture tells us that if you resist the devil he will flee from you, but if you resist my wife she will fly at you." Now, the Tory Government and the Tories throughout the country are not like that strong-minded woman. If you resist them sufficiently, if you resist them unanimously, you may depend upon it that at the next election they will flee from you.

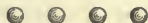


Mr. Chamberlain was delivering a rousing political speech in Birmingham. The hall was so packed that not one more human being could jam in nor could anyone get out. Suddenly, in the middle of the hall a scowling man rose and howled, "What did Mr. Gladstone say in 1872?" "Shame! Put him out!" yelled the crowd. Three men hurled the interrupter a few yards, and others hustled him to the street. As he pulled himself together out of the dirt, he grinned pleasantly at a man who had followed him comfortably out from the hall and asked, "What did Mr. Gladstone say in 1872?" "Oh, I don't know," he replied, "and I don't care. I had a terrible toothache and I couldn't butt my way through that crowd, and the only thing to do was to get thrown out."

In an interesting article on "Lord Beaconsfield and his two Challengers," in the "Queen," the Rev. G. W. Skene tells how the great statesman was twice at Malta challenged to mortal combat. On one occasion a native dandy, reeking with scent, passed him, and Dizzy's "Pah! how that man stinks" carried as far as its subject's ear. The man turned and handed his card—the preliminary to a challenge. Disraeli at once produced his card in return, but before handing it to him, and with the most perfect good humour, addressed him in his own inimitably winning way: "Mr. M.," looking at the card, "I see that is your name. Mine is Disraeli," and he flicked a speck of dust off his sleeve, while the other looked enlightened. "Before this goes further may I beg to detain you for a minute. What I have to say will not take long in the saying. It is of course, much to be regretted that you should have been given cause for offence by any expression which fell from me unguardedly. This I say without hesitation and without any mental reservation. But the proposed remedy, Mr. M. It is to that I wish to be allowed to direct your attention, for indeed it would prove to be at the best ineffective, at the worst disastrous. You propose now to kill me, or that I should kill you. And why? Because—it is, I repeat, very much to be regretted—I said you stink. Yes, 'but if you kill me you won't stink any the less, whereas if I kill you, you will only stink the more!'"

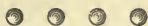


When the late Mr. Caine was a candidate for Barrow-in-Furness he told the following story, which, he said, he had from Mr. Barnum:—One winter morning two of his elephants began shaking with chills, so he sent his keeper for three gallons of whisky. One and a half gallons were given to each elephant. It cured them. Next morning, when the keeper went to them, he found both elephants shaking with might and main. "No, you don't," he shouted. "You are well enough to-day," and they stopped shaking.

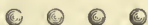


A lecturer, in returning thanks, said, "It gives me great pleasure to come here for two reasons—first, because I'm paid for it; and, secondly, because I was born in this town—(great applause). I may also remark that I tell them that wherever I go." The remarks of the audience are not fit for publication.

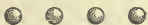
Mr. Gladstone, when Mr. Beerbohm Tree was introduced to him, hardly knew upon what topic to converse with him, but at length asked Mr. Tree's opinion as to the politics of the stage, whether it is as a rule Liberal or Conservative. "Well, sir," said Mr. Tree wickedly, "I really have not studied the question, but I should think the actors are mostly Conservative. "Dear me," replied Mr. Gladstone, "I wonder whether there is any exception to that rule?" "I should say," replied Mr. Tree, "the scene-shifters are Radicals to a man!"



An audience listening to a story is often very critical, but seldom exact. I heard a friend illustrating a point tell a tale of an English lady who dabbled in shares and stocks, who recently drew a ticket number 24 in an Austrian lottery, and who declared she knew she would win something. People asked what made her so sure of her luck. "I dreamt three times of the number 7, so I was sure," she replied, "the winning number would be 24." My friend said, "So there is something in dreams after all," and the audience cheered approvingly. Now when I went to school three times seven was not twenty-four.

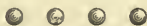


I once made and won a bet that I would tell a really absurd story to an audience, and no one would see its absurdity. It was this: "The Prince of Wales was reviewing some old soldiers and noticed a man with only one arm. He asked where it was lost, and was told. The Prince said, 'I learn you yearn to earn the Victoria Cross. What would you give for it? Your other arm?' The man answered immediately by drawing his sword and cutting off his remaining arm." The audience cheered boisterously, and the man I bet with foolishly asked, "What is there absurd about that?"

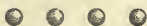


A clergyman at a Conservative meeting once made me laugh. Taking up my text, "Why don't more people attend political meetings?" he related how, on finding that his stableman was not in the habit of attending church, he spoke to his coachman about it. "They ought to go," he said. "That's just what I say myself, sir," was the rejoinder. "I says to them, 'Look at me. I go; and what harm does it do me?'"

A politician spends many weary hours travelling. Occasionally, however, even in the train, he does get a smile. For example, one lady passenger said, "If that window isn't opened this minute I know I shall die." Second ditto, "Who opened that window? If it is not shut I shall die, I am sure." Whereupon I "put the fat in the fire" by soothingly observing to a mild-looking gent in the corner, "Please keep that window open till one of these ladies dies, then shut it and give the other a chance to quit this troubled world!"

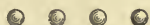


My readers may like to be reminded of how the Home Rulers used to get up eviction scenes in Ireland. Here is an illustration:—Mr. G. R. Sims (a Radical) in the "Referee" (December 22nd, 1889), wrote:—"The mother was clinging wildly to her children, a little girl of five and a little boy of six, and declaring that she would not be turned out into the cruel world with her darlins. Tears were in the eyes of the married constabulary, smothered sobs of sympathy broke from the military. The captain, with a choking sensation in his throat, went up to the children and spoke a kind and comforting word to them. The little girl looked up, and in the strongest Scotch accent howled that she wouldn't be taken from her 'mither,' and the little boy, in unmistakable Cockney tones, declared that he 'wasn't a going to be turned from his mar.' 'Begorra, captain,' said an Irish official, looking on, 'it's myself that has evicted them two orphans twenty times over. It's a different Irish mother that they've had ivery time.' Which was true. The little red-headed Scotch girl and the pale little Cockney boy were hired for the occasion, having played the part of the evicted orphans to several poor cottagers with great effect all over the country. I believe that the two children originally appeared in an Irish play which went the round of the provinces with tremendous success. It was a capital idea to transfer them from the boards to real life. I lift my hat to the Land League gentleman who had such a capital eye for dramatic effect."



A poor man was in Dale Street, Liverpool, in need of medical assistance, when the boys were selling papers with news of a British victory. He asked a lad the nearest way to the hospital, and the young urchin replied, "You stand there, shout three cheers for Kruger, and you'll find the road to the Infirmary, guv'nor."

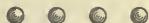
A quotation often causes a speaker to stumble, as, for example, a Primrose Leaguer, whose wife was Ruling Councillor and in the chair, was making a reference to the qualities of the sitting M.P., and he said he was like his wife. "I took her for better, for worse. She might have been better, she could not have been worse." Of course, he meant to put it the other way, but could not understand the roars of laughter, until the lady in the chair said "I forgive him this time."



A mean trick was played on an audience and on the writer at a bye-election at Exeter. The South African war had begun, and General Buller, who had a vote in Exeter, had gone out to command at the front. The night before the poll, as I was addressing a wonderfully enthusiastic and big meeting, a boy walked up the centre of the hall, and handed a telegram to the chairman, who, after opening it, passed it to me. I am told I acted the part splendidly. Wait a moment—flourishing the telegram as the audience waited breathlessly, I announced, "News from the front—a wire to the electors—saying, 'Men of Devon, do your duty! Return Sir Edgar Vincent, and send glorious news to cheer Buller and his army.'" I had never heard or seen such enthusiasm in my life. Afterwards I learned a trick had been played—the envelope and telegraph form were genuine, but had had the former contents obliterated, and the new words black-pencilled, but I am prepared to swear on fifty Bibles I was an innocent culprit.



John Bright was admonished by his daughter for his slovenly dress. He said, "It doesn't matter, nobody knows me in London, so I can dress as I like." "But you dress as badly in Rochdale," was the reply. "Well, my dear, but in Rochdale everybody knows me—so it matters still less how I dress there."

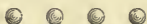


The late Lord Beaconsfield, whose chivalry to women, and particularly his devotion to his own wife, was so noticeable, once addressed a Church Congress, soon after Darwin's book had been published, discussing the problem whether we were descended from apes or angels. Mr. Disraeli, unfolding his arms as if about to embrace the whole company, said, "I unhesitatingly declare myself on the side of the angels."

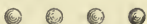
There is humour even at a war. Private Kaye, 2nd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, with Methuen, continued his correspondence home, with a short letter, as follows:—

	Played.		Won.		Lost.		Dn.		Goals.	Points.
British	3	...	3	...	0	...	0	...	3	3
Kruger	3	...	0	...	3	...	0	...	0	0

How is that for the League champions and cup?



A well-known M.P. was presenting the prizes at a flower show, and endeavoured to impress the pleasure and importance of a close observance of nature. Speaking of flowers, he was exhibiting a daisy to the people, pointing out its beauties, and reminding them that the flower and mankind were creatures of the Supreme Being. He added by way of emphasis: "The Lord that made me—made a daisy." "You bet He did," spoke up someone in the background, and it was not until the audience was on the verge of convulsions that the M.P. saw the point and yielded the platform to the next man on the programme.



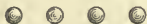
Mr. David Plunkett was walking across the Lobby of the House of Commons, when an hon. member said:—

"Hullo, Mr. P., what's the matter?"

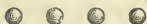
"Gout," said the eloquent gent., ironically.

"Ah," said the other, "I congratulate you. You know that the gout always means a fresh lease of life."

"Yes," said Mr. Plunkett, hobbling away, "but it's at a rack rent."

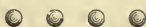


One day I went into the National Portrait Gallery, London, for shelter from the rain, and was intensely amused to hear a lounging sort of dirty fellow adversely criticising the great artists, and he pointed out to me as a case in point, Millais' great picture of Gladstone—he had painted one of the G.O.M.'s eyes blue and the other brown.



Perhaps the most ancient politician I ever met was the man who, disgusted with replies to his questions at Bellingham, made a speech declaring "he had been a Liberal ever since his father was born."

An old lecturing friend of mine, when asked how long he would require to prepare a speech, replied, "That depends upon how much time I am to occupy in its delivery. If I am to speak for a quarter of an hour, I should like a week to prepare; if I am to speak for half an hour, three days will do; if I am to go on as long as I like, I am ready now."

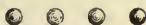


After hearing a Conservative M.P. and the writer of this book, a Liberal came on the platform to offer a few words in reply. He caused a mystery by dramatically holding aloft something, and saying:—

"This is a political walnut. The rough shell represents the Conservatives; the next, the thin, bitter skin is the Liberal Unionists, and the kernel represents the good Radical."

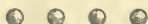
A man in the audience cried out, "Now crack it."

The speaker did so, when lo and behold, the kernel was rotten! The mixture of laughter and chagrin that followed may be imagined.



The first time I got my friend Mr. Pettifer, to speak at Garstang, Mr. Singleton, the chairman, announced to the audience that he would speak on "Agricultural Topics." In acknowledging his ignorance, Mr. Pettifer told us he was not the only man who had to deal with subjects he did not understand. "A New York paper lost its old agricultural editor, and the management decided to have a smart, up-to-date farm editor. They got a young fellow from an agricultural college, who came with a cart load of diplomas and a whole lot of books. Amongst the queries sent in the first week was one asking the best method of harvesting a crop of turnips? The young editor shirked the question for a week or two. He ran through all his books, but found nothing about harvesting turnips. The correspondent wrote again demanding an answer, and the editor-in-chief at last gave the young man to understand that unless the question was answered at once the great agricultural reputation of the paper would be gone for ever. So the poor young man made the best of it, and answered in the next issue: 'Turnips are a very difficult crop to harvest, because they do not always ripen at once. But I find the best way is to send a lad up the tree to shake it, so that only the thoroughly ripe and fully grown ones are removed.'"

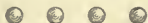
The story has often been repeated that "a crowd once pulled the slates off to see the Lancashire Little Bee." The fact is, the Abercorn Liberal Association in South Wales, in February, 1885, sent me an invitation to speak there, as they had never heard a Conservative lecturer, and offering to pay railway fare and other expenses. Of course I went, and again in August I addressed a meeting in the Drill Hall, which was so crowded, and the night was so hot, that some of the committee tore a lot of slates off to let in a little fresh air.



I lectured one night at Huddersfield on "The British Empire," with a lantern, and we had several coloured slides with charts relating to trade. My chairman, a doctor, told me of an experience he had lecturing on the circulation of the blood, with coloured slides. One showed the right side of the heart marked red, and the left side blue. He evidently had not explained this slide thoroughly, for an old lady said afterwards to him, "We are truly and wonderfully made, but the most interesting thing I learned from your lecture—I never knew it before—was that one side of my heart was blue and the other red."

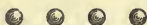


A revising barrister, who had a Court yearly at a popular seaside resort in Lancashire, and was turned 84, a few years ago broke his leg, and when he got better married his trained nurse. All the barristers on his circuit attended the wedding out of respect for the old gent., and the ceremony would have been of the usual serious nature if one of the visitors had not espied over the chancel the remnants of Christmas decorations. Pointing to his venerable friend, who was then being tied fast, and to the text overhead, "Unto us a child is born," he spoiled the solemnity of the occasion.

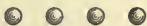


A working-man speaker, dealing with the South African war, was evidently annoyed with Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's support of Mr. Lloyd-George's motion on the concentration camps, and he indignantly said, "he ought to be kicked by a jackass, and I should like to do it."

At the Swindon bye-election I was in charge of the largest ward, my committee-room being a chapel. In order to create interest in the work, I organised a series of meetings, and one night the Liberals tried a splendid dodge. They packed the porch so that no one could get through. Over the door was a big stone with the motto, "God is Love," and underneath was a crowd of people swearing because they could not get into the room. In the ante-room behind the pulpit was a wretched harmonium, and I got my friend, Mr. T. W. Bagley, to stand in there out of sight, singing "Soldiers of the Queen" to the accompaniment of this old instrument. The fellows jammed in the door couldn't resist peeping in the room to see who was ill, or whatever was the matter, and as the crush was loosened and then broken our people pushed on, and the crowd got through. We had a good meeting.



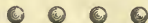
One night when lecturing I made an awful slip—a fine specimen of a laughable incongruity of ideas—and at once apologised for making such "an Irish bull." This irritated an Irish friend, who later, over a glass of whisky, protested we had as many bulls as they had in Ireland. In England, he said, we were bull-headed, and bull-necked, in fact "bulls all over." He commented on public-house signs, and told a story of a street where, he stated, there were six public-houses with signs of "Bull." A companion offered to bet there were only five, and the wager was accepted. He proceeded to count. "There is the White Bull, the Black Bull, the Brown Bull, the Spotted Bull, the Pied Bull; that was five." "Yes, that's all." "No, there's another one—the—the—Red Cow." "Ha, ha; that's an Irish Bull." "Very well, said the Irish patriot, "if the Red Cow is an Irish bull I've won my bet."



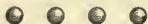
"I voted for you," said a working man the day after the municipal election. "Thank you, my man!" and the successful candidate beamed. "'Twas he did it," said the man, pointing to a goat grazing near by. "I did not intend to at first, but the other afternoon you were passing, and you patted my goat Billy and give 'im an apple, and, says I, if the gentleman's so sociable as all that, he must have my vote."

Suddenly called upon to propose the health of the ladies at a dinner, a bashful man, unable to say more, blurted out:—

“They come as a boon and a blessing to men,
Like the Pickwick, the Owl, and the Waverley pen.”



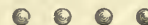
Appealing for support for Sir Elliott Lees, who was a candidate at Birkenhead, a friend of mine was taken aback when a man in the crowd called out, “Why should I vote for a fellow who parts his hair in the middle?” Quick as a shot came the reply, “That is just the man you should vote for. Doesn’t his action show a desire to be fair to both sides?”



Lord Spencer, at Oxford, said, “An examination was going on in Birmingham, and the teacher was very enthusiastic about the beauties of nature. Having dilated upon the beauties of mountains, skies, clouds, trees, flowers, and he knew not what, he said, “My dear children, tell me to whom do we owe all that?” There was a long silence, and then one of the children answered, ‘Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.’ When the teacher explained that the answer was quite wrong, the child said, ‘Oh, sir, we did not know you were such a great pro-Boer.’”

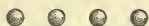


In Liverpool a boy was doing “a roaring trade” selling “pictures of the war—portraits of Buller, White, and De Wet—one penny a packet.” Naturally, I speculated a copper, and went to a shop window to look at my treasures. I collared the lad, and demanded he should explain how it was there was no Det Wet in my packet? Looking a perfect picture of innocence, the young scamp said, “Has he bolted again, sir?”

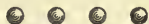


At a bye-election, once, standing outside a village polling booth, I overheard two men talking. Asked if he had voted, the taller man said, “Yes, I have just been and done it. I put a cross against one name and struck t’other out.” “And then you dropped the thing into the poor box?” “No, I wrapped it up, and put it into my pocket. I’m not such a fool as to let anybody see how I voted.”

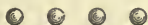
It is strange how little incidents cause talk. When I was in the Rhondda Valley, a Rev. J. Matthews, of Swansea, had been lecturing at Abercarn. A local Tory, Mr. F. W. Brett, had opposed, and remarked, "Mr. Matthews has told us that Mr. Galdstone has more brains in his head than all the Bishops put together, and that he believed Mr. G. could swallow the whole Bench of Bishops without suffering indigestion. All I can say," rejoined Mr. Brett, "is that then Mr. G. would have more brains in his stomach than he ever had in his head." This was remembered by all who had forgotten the lecture.



A Liberal speaker staying with me at a country inn, at an election, told me of a meeting he attended where the chairman, a local preacher, opened the meeting with a long-winded prayer, and concluded by saying, "And now, O Lord, we have with us to-night a man who is known throughout the country as a great and shining light among the Liberal party. Help us, O Lord—help us to understand what he is about to say to us, and may we be amused by it; and, if possible, grant that we may derive some real benefit from his lecture." No wonder my friend inwardly made use of a naughty word.

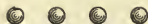


At a Welsh disestablishment meeting in Flintshire the chairman—a Welsh deacon, with no sense of humour—introduced Mr. Lloyd-George thus: "Gentlemen, I haff to introduce to you to-night the Member for the Carnarvon Boroughs. He hass come here to reply to what the Bishop of St. Asaph said the other night about Welsh Disestablishment. . . . In my opinion, gentlemen, that Bishop of St. Asaph iss one off the biggest liars in creashon; but, thank God—yes, thank God—we haff a match for him to-night." The story is told with great gusto by Mr. Lloyd-George himself.

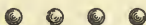


Mr. Winston Churchill, M.P., replying to a Conservative opponent on "Tariff Reform," said he reminded him of a well-known saying of a famous member of the House of Commons:—"Before he gets up he does not know what he is going to say. Whilst he is speaking he doesn't know what he is saying, and when he sits down he doesn't know what he has said."

When agent for Doncaster I went to speak at a meeting of colliers at Anston, with Mr. Eli Waddington. Questions were invited, and the newspaper report said:—"One Radical, in the course of a long rambling speech, twitted Messrs. Waddington and Bottomley with being young men and talking only of things they read of, emphatically repeating that they were neither of them living when the 1832 Reform Bill was passed, nor in 1846 when the Corn Laws were repealed, and added, 'In future don't, please, believe things you have never seen and only read of,' whereupon an aged Tory on the opposite side of the room rose and, in most sepulchral tones, said to the old Radical, 'Now, now, Charlie, when tha goes to th' chapel, and hears parson preach about Adam and Eve, tell him tha' doesn't believe it; tha never knew either Adam or his wife, tha nobbut read on 'em in books.' Great merriment then ensued."

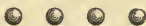


Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, M.P., at his first contest was asked his opinion on the liquor traffic. He replied: "The liquor traffic is a large subject, and I can hardly enter on it here. There is an old story of a Highlander who was asked if whisky was not a bad thing. 'Yes,' he said, 'very bad—especially bad whisky.' I am strongly of that man's opinion."



A gentleman calling on an M.P. one day, while waiting in the reception-room, was attracted by the manner of the small attendant and started a random conversation. "And how much do you earn a week, my boy?" he inquired. "Ten pounds," said the youngster, with avidity. Being shown into the member's private office just then, the visitor's surprise found vent in words, "Mighty bright youth you have there, to be getting ten pounds a week," he remarked. "Why," said the M.P., "he only gets twenty-two shillings." "But he told me just now you were giving him ten pounds a week," persisted the gentleman. "Nonsense," said the M.P., and touched the bell. "Billy," he said, "did you tell this gentleman I was paying you ten pounds a week?" "No, sir." "You didn't. Well, what did you say?" "I said I earned it," was the prompt and stout rejoinder.

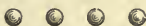
At a Primrose League concert near Oldham, a local vocalist gave a terrible rendering to a good song. At the third verse when he said, "My heart is dead!" a rude lad bawled out, "How's your poor feet!"



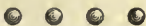
At a Radical meeting held recently in a town in the east of Scotland the speaker was frequently interrupted in his remarks. At length, losing patience, he looked at his interrupter, and said, "One fool at a time, gentlemen, please." "You gang on then, maister," came the reply.



The audience was greatly amused, said the reporter, by the stories of a politician home from the South African War. Here is a sample. A soldier who had been reported killed in a certain battle, and against whose name in the regimental book a note to that effect had been made, afterwards turned up and reported himself. Then the sergeant made another note, "Died by mistake." The man was placed in hospital, and a few weeks later succumbed to the wounds he had received. This fact was communicated to the sergeant through the colonel of the regiment. Then a third note was made. "Redied, by order of the colonel."

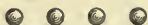


I remember one old worthy who, in orating to a crowded meeting of sturdy northern working men, told what he had sacrificed by going to Westminster; how, instead of enjoying cultured leisure, he was looking after their interests, how he had given up a great post abroad, worth £10,000 a year, so that he might represent them in Parliament. He halted for the expectant thunders of applause. There only came a quiet comment from a quiet old man: "What a — fool!"



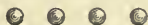
A successful candidate gave the workers a big dinner, and towards the close of the repast selected a toothpick from a tray near him, and politely passed it on to a rough-looking working man neighbour, who however peremptorily declined it, exclaiming:—"No, thank you; I have already eaten two of those — things and I want no more."

Travel wonderfully develops some people's intelligence. There was a man in a train I was travelling in who evidently had been on "tower," and was anxious that everyone should know it. "See that stick? You wouldn't think that it had been dipped in the River Jordan. I dipped it in myself." A little later he took out his watch ostensibly to see the time. "Good time-keeper; bought it in Rome. That pendant—got it in Jerusalem," and so on. Presently a working man, speaking to no one in particular, said: "See these trousers? Well, a' gat them when a' was in the Militia." Then the reminiscences ended.

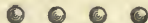


Perhaps the readiest retort I ever heard was when a friend of mine was speaking, and a man in the audience said, "O, you go to —!" My friend immediately remarked, "That must be the gentleman who bothered a girl so much that the poet wrote the couplet:—

"Go ask papa," the maiden said,
He, knowing her papa was dead,
And what an awful life he'd led,
Quite understood her when she said,
"Go ask papa."

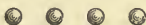


Dealing with the Education Act, an M.P. recently said a School Board official called to ask why Johnny had not been to school. "Why," said his mother, "he was thirteen yesterday, and I think he's had schooling enough." "Schooling enough!" exclaimed the official; "why, I didn't finish schooling till I was twenty-three." The woman eyed the man, and exclaimed, "You don't mean to say you was such a thickhead as that? But there, I thought that you looked a bit simple! My Johnny's different."

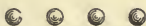


A speaker at a bye-election was extolling the late member, and saying what a good member he was, when a voice asked, "Do you think he has gone to heaven?" The retort came quickly, "I don't know where he has gone, but if he wanted to go there, there was nobody could keep him out."

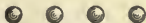
At a dinner given by a political club recently, a man, who is unusually young for one who has attained to such prominence in his profession, was for the first time in his life set down for a response to one of the toasts. When at last he was called on, his beardless face flushed, and his manner was very embarrassed. Nevertheless, he stood up and delivered himself: "Gentlemen, before I entered this room I had an excellent speech prepared. Only Heaven and myself knew what I was going to say. Now Heaven alone knows." And he sat down.



To the revilings of a local Conservative a Liberal thus replied: "The Gentleman taunts me with not having been born here as he was. Let me tell the gentleman that my only excuse is that I am a Lancashire man from choice, while he is one by necessity. If there is any difference between us, it is that I came into this county with my trousers on, while the gentleman came into it naked."

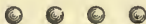


Some years ago when Mr. Gladstone made his celebrated speech advising farmers to cultivate the growth of fruit, an enthusiastic Liberal grocer in Chester had printed in large letters on a board placed over his shop doors, the following words:—"Mr. Gladstone says, 'Jam is an excellent substitute for butter;' try our home-made jam." A woman bought two pots of the home-made, and carried them off. In a few days she returned, laid one pot of jam on the counter, and with an indignant air, exclaimed, "I've been brought up to believe every word Mr. Gladstone spoke was truth; I'll never believe him again." "Indeed, madame; why not?" inquired the bewildered grocer. "Why?" repeated the indignant matron, "because he said jam was an excellent substitute for butter. It is not. I've tried to fry some sausages in it."



"Who is there," cried the political orator, "who will lift a voice against the truth of my statement?" Just then a donkey on the outskirts of the crowd gave vent to one of the piercing "Hee-haws" of his tribe. The laugh was on the orator for a moment, but, assuming an air of triumph, he lifted his voice above the din to say, "I knew nobody but a jackass would try it."

A young Radical candidate had an embarrassing experience while canvassing. He found a farmer digging in his garden, and, leaning over the railings, said, "Good mornin'." "Mornin'," gruffly responded the farmer. "Garden looks well," ventured the would-be M.P. "Might be wuss," said the farmer, who was in no mood for gossip. "I am the Liberal candidate for this constituency," continued the young gent., "and I am just taking a look round." "Oh! that's all right," snapped the farmer, "so long as you don't take anything else."

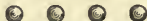


Miss Meresia Neville, who is one of the most popular heads of the Primrose League, was addressing a meeting at Salisbury, when a man punctuated her remarks from time to time by ejaculating "Oh! the little darling, the little darling." She told him to show his affection for her by helping to return her friend, Mr. Palmer, at the head of the poll.

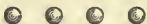


Visitor: Does your district boast of a Member of Parliament?

Hostess: No, we used to boast of one, but we have to apologise for it now.

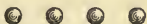


I never felt like bolting but once. I had been invited to speak in a town I had never previously visited. I arrived somewhat early, and in walking round the place to see what it was like saw a lot of cases in front of a grocer's window. On a label attached to them was a note some wag had put there:—"Eggs, for electioneering purposes, one shilling per hundred."

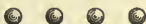


Colonel Saunderson, M.P., at Liverpool, dealing with the Home Rule Bill, said:—"Who liked the Bill. ("Nobody.") That gentleman is quite wrong. They had perhaps remarked, and he appealed especially to the ladies, that in a large family a cripple was generally the favourite of its parents. A ricketty, hopeless, incurable cripple, which to ordinary humanity looked an absolute encumbrance was as a rule the favourite. (Hear. hear.) That was the case of the Home Rule Bill." (Loud laughter.)

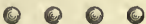
It was just after an election, and the Conservative candidate had been beaten. When meeting one of his friends he was asked how he felt. "Well," said the defeated, "I feel like Lazarus." "How's that?" inquired the friend. "Because," replied the other, "Lazarus was licked by dogs. So was I."



A great many years ago, when we were discussing Sir W. Lawson's Permissive Bill, I heard Mr. Tom Nash, afterwards candidate for Stockport, tell the story of a total abstainer recently converted, who was invited to discourse at a temperance meeting, which he did in the following terms. "The first week after I signed the pledge, ladies and gentlemen, I saved enough to buy a waistcoat. (Applause.) The next week I was able to save sufficient to expend upon a pair of trousers. (Vigorous applause.) The third week I had actually put by enough to purchase a coat. (Hear, hear.) But, ladies and gentlemen, instead of a coat I have concluded to buy a coffin, for I am certain that if I continue to keep the pledge I shall need it." (Groans and hisses, general disorder, and cries of "Turn him out.")



I was at a political meeting not long ago where the candidate astonished and amused us by saying:—"Often the question was asked, 'What shall we do with our boys?' The answer was, 'Make them caddies.' (Loud laughter.) What better use could they be put to; a boy with an armful of clubs and a mashie in his hand was ready for anything or anybody. (Laughter.) It introduced him to a sport whose fascination never grew less, it gave him an extraordinary knowledge of human nature—(laughter)—and it did not temper it with too much respect, even though he might be continually brought into contact with eminent statesmen and high dignitaries of the State." (Laughter.)



I was once dining in an hotel commercial-room with men "on the road." Fish was served for two, and the carver handed the smallest fish to his friend, who growled somewhat. "What would you have done?" inquired the carver. "Why, given you the larger one, of course." "Well," came the retort, "I have it now, what more do you want?"

"A Friend" sent me the following election address, issued at Hawarden during the first Parish Council election:—

To the Electors,—

Having been requested by numerous ratepayers, I have reluctantly consented to offer myself as a candidate for the mystic letters "P.C."

Not being a landlord, capitalist, or taxpayer, I fear I have little personal recommendation for such an important office, yet I venture to hope that my advanced Radical opinions will ensure me the support of all sections.

I was born, strange as it may seem, of lowly but dishonest parents; the latter proclivity has occasionally asserted itself through life; yet should you do me the honour of returning me to represent you at this coming Pantomimic Council, I shall fearlessly and persistently advocate the following much-needed reforms in the parish:—

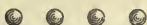
1. That suitable clothing be provided the Cherub on the Fountain in order that public morality may be observed.
2. More harmony in the Choral Society.
3. The revival at Hawarden of the Primrose League.
4. That public-houses be open seven days a week on condition that the proprietors provide better booze.
5. More church services and fewer collections.
6. That easy couches be provided in appropriate places for the idle loafers who persistently monopolise our foot-paths.
7. That new instruments, especially drums, and possibly more wind, but certainly more music, be given to the Hawarden band.
8. That the improvements at Fern Bank, when completed, shall appear in the "Daily Graphic."
9. Should advocate the election of the Intermediate School on Buckley Common, and the purchase of Gatling guns to protect it.
10. That a marble statue be erected opposite the Castle Inn to the honour of the "Man who shot the cow."
11. Should impose a tax on all bachelors, bicycles, bankers, babies, and Buckley bricks.
12. Should advocate a reduction of the Institute rent, such money to be devoted to local charities which are now defunct.

As I owe several bills in the parish, I think it advisable not to make a personal canvas, but leave my programme and sensible men to return me to the top of the poll.

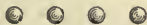
I am, your most obedient servant,

MAGO LUSHINGTON.

Many years ago, a well-known public speaker, referring to a statement by his opponent that he "could not conscientiously support" some measure or other, quoted Mark Twain as having written—"Your conscience is a nuisance. A conscience is like a child. If you pet it and play with it, and let it have everything it wants, it becomes spoiled, and intrudes on all your amusements and most of your griefs. Treat your conscience as you would treat anything else. When it is rebellious, spank it—be severe with it, argue with it, prevent it from coming to play with you at all hours, and you will secure a good conscience. That is to say, a properly trained one. A spoiled conscience destroys all the pleasure of life. I think I have reduced mine to order. At least I haven't heard from it for some time."

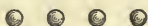


Mr. J. A. Rentoul, M.P., at a Warrington meeting, said:—"I have not got any speech prepared to deliver to you to-night, because in order to prepare a political speech one requires to have something to attack. The present Government has given us nothing to attack, and consequently I couldn't prepare a speech. (Laughter.) Not that that makes the slightest difference—(more laughter)—because it has been said that a Scotchman thinks twice and then speaks; that an Englishman thinks and speaks at the same time; and that an Irishman speaks first and thinks about it afterwards. (Laughter.) Therefore I shall deliver to you my speech to-night, and shall probably carefully prepare it to-morrow or the next day." (Loud laughter and cheers.)

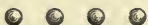


Mr. Beachcroft complained at a recent meeting of the London County Council that for the past three weeks he had been treated with disrespect and indignity in the Council. Then Colonel Rotton declared that he had been "personally insulted" by Mr. Benn. The Colonel referred to a discussion on land values a year ago in the Council, when Mr. Benn, holding up the colonel's election address, which stated that the question was ripe, asked jocularly, "If the question was ripe in 1892, in what condition is it at the present time?" "Rotten!" roared a score of members, amid peals of laughter. This was the "personal insult" he complained of.

The new woman orator waxed eloquent. "And what," she demanded, as she came to the climax, "is to be the result of our emancipation?" She looked around with the calm assurance of one who had asked a poser, and this was too much for the little man who was waiting for his wife in a far corner of the hall. "I know," he shouted. "Ah," returned the new woman on the platform, scornfully, "the little man with the bald head thinks he has solved the problem that we came here to discuss this afternoon. We will gladly give our attention while he tells us what is to be the result." "Cold dinners and ragged children," roared the little man.



A political agent was driving home one dark night, when, the way seeming long, he became uncertain whether or not he was on the right road. He stopped his horse at a cross-road, clambered out of the dogcart, crawled up on a fence, and struck a match to read the signboard which he could dimly see outlined. At the peril of his neck he deciphered the sign, and nearly fell off the fence when he saw these words:—'When in doubt use Smith's lubricating oil.'

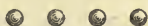


An excellent story is told by a prominent politician who has just accepted the office of Mayor of a prosperous northern borough. As an alderman he had consented, together with some colleagues in the local council, to attend a large temperance gathering. They were rather late in arriving, and the chairman of the meeting, with the object of making time, announced that they would sing the hymn, "Hold the fort, for I am coming." Before the hymn was concluded, the civic procession, headed by the alderman, entered the hall just as the meeting was repeating the lines, "See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on!" The humour of the situation dawned on everyone, and the remainder of the hymn was lost in a burst of merriment.

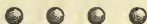


A Primrose Dame attacked a Radical M.P. in the newspaper. He replied: "Mr. A. flatly refuses to be drawn into any controversy, either private or public, and the only remark he wishes to make is that the threatening and presumptuous letter of Miss B. has as much effect upon him as the aqueous element on the dorsal fin of a drake's wife."

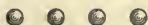
An M.P. confesses himself once greatly encouraged by a criticism passed upon him which he accidentally overheard: "I was going from a meeting and passed two men walking slowly away. I had spoken against them, and they were discussing why I had done so. 'Well 'ow on earth 'e could do it I don't see, do you, Bill?' "'E's a fool." "Yes, 'e's a fool, a — fool, but 'e did 'is best." "Ay, I think 'e did 'is best." The M.P. adds: "I have often thought that one might rest beneath an unkinder epitaph than this:—"He was a — fool, but he did his best.""



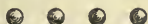
At a political meeting held in Burnley recently one of the principal speakers, with much vehemence, declared that they had knocked the bottom out of the present Tory Member's arguments, so much so, in fact, that Mr. Mitchell had not a leg to stand on." "Well," came the quick retort from a workman in the audience, "All the more reason why he should hev the seat!"



It was at an open-air meeting in a village near Exeter that a well-known speaker was holding forth. "Men!" he declaimed, "what we want and what we are going to get is free land. We want the land for the people. Free land, men, we want, and we are going to have free land." Just then a large piece of earth landed on the speaker's eye, and while he was removing it a voice yelled out, "There's a bit of Devonshire to begin with!"

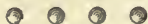


In the course of an examination held at a Blackpool school the other day, one of the questions set in a general information paper was, "What is the Budget?" An ingenious answer given by one pupil was the following: "A comic statement issued for the amusement of the people of England."



When addressing a political gathering recently a speaker unwittingly said that "I miss many of the old faces I used to shake hands with." As the audience roared and laughed he wished he'd been a hundred miles away.

Dr. Rentoul, the new Conservative candidate for Bolton, says:—"I never produced so much laughter and applause as at Stowmarket. I never was so happy on the platform or so unhappy later in the evening. I was illustrating how Mr. Gladstone, after trying to make the Irish Home Rulers loyal Unionists, finally joined them, and I said my well-known fellow-countryman was coming home one night from a dinner. He was drunk—(loud laughter)—in fact, he was drunker than usual—(great laughter)—and that's saying a good deal. (Immense cheering.) Finding my remarks so funny, I spun them out, and rung the changes again on Sheridan's condition. Then, I said, he came up to a man lying by the roadside, who was even drunker than Sheridan. (Immense laughter) The fallen man said, 'Help me up, help me up!' Sheridan went over like the good fellow he was—(much applause)—and tried to raise the fallen man. But being unable to do so because of his own condition—(great laughter)—he said, 'Well, I can't help you up, but I'll lie down beside you.' (Laughter and cheers lasting long.) I felt I had made the hit of my life, but after the meeting the local doctor came up to me and said he was Dr. Sheridan, an Irishman, and that he was the only Sheridan the audience, who were mostly his patients, had ever heard of. The doctor, however, enjoyed the joke, and I spent the evening at his house."

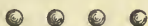


The late Mr. Edward Karslake, Q.C., while canvassing at Colchester in the seventies, is said to have asked an elector to make him two trunks. "But I'm not a trunkmaker," said the disappointed tradesman. "What are you then?" inquired the candidate. "I'm an undertaker," was the answer. "Very well, then," said the learned gentleman, "make me a coffin instead." When the coffin arrived at his London residence there were members of his family who strongly objected to giving it house room. "Very good," he rejoined, "I'll have it sent to my chambers; it will serve as a receptacle for Beaven's Reports."

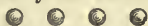


The chairman was getting eloquent about the candidate, and growing warm, declared, "What we want are men of weight," when a voice startled him by asking, "What is your weight, guv'nor?" Everybody laughed when he innocently replied, "Eight stone four."

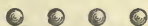
The neatest way of settling a noisy meeting was adopted by Mr. H. J. Pettifer, at an election meeting in the Palatine Hall, Lancaster. Several speakers had tried and failed to get a hearing. Mr. Pettifer, when called on by the chairman, at once went down on his knees, and commenced to chat with the reporters, saying, "Just pretend to be putting something in your note-books," and occasionally looking at the audience in a most comical way, as if wondering what was distressing them. This lasted fully ten minutes, and in the midst of a temporary lull, Mr. Pettifer said, "Go on, I like it; don't mind me," causing a roar of laughter. Then he gradually rose, saying, "I wan't to tell you a secret," and his queer brogue "caught on," and he scored a great triumph.



At Newcastle-on-Tyne, a Liberal friend of mine called at a house and said, "Good morning, Mrs. Hoggett, I've called to see if your good man will vote for Mr. Morley?" "He'll do nothing of the kind." "Then doubtless he'll support Mr. Cowen?" "'Deed, but he'll not." "Bless us all, ma'am, I never thought your man was a Hammondite." "Devil a bit," she cried, "he's not ganning to vote for anybody at aal." "But surely, that's singular; that's—" "Hoad your whist, mon, he's in gaol!"

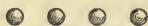


"A Friend," writing me with reference to "a slip of the tongue" I confessed to, gives me a few good illustrations at one lesson. A clergyman giving out the lesson the other day made a slip, and announced "The second chapter of the 'Duke of Booteronomy.'" Instantly conscious of what he had done he quickly corrected himself and said, "I mean the Boot of Dukeeronomy." We are all liable to slips of the tongue, and clergymen and public speaker especially so. I once heard a preacher in the pulpit refer to Conquering Kings as "Kinkering Kongs." Here is a good sample of a slip:—A lady of my acquaintance went to church the other day, and found someone in her seat. She bent down and whispered, "Excuse me, madame, but you are occupewing my pie."



Some very funny slips are made by speakers. A Radical, ridiculing the acquisition of Cyprus by Lord Beaconsfield, said he had been there, and "if he had stayed there in that climate till now, he would have been dead years ago."

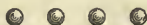
Differing with me in opinion as to the benefit of the Primrose League and an extension of the suffrage to women, a speaker, moving a thanks, ejaculated, "I defy anyone to point out a woman in this 'ere country who could be a policeman. Would a woman turn out in the dead of the night to track and arrest a murderer? I say no. Ten to one she would elope with him."



Proposing a vote of thanks to me at a meeting in Sowerby Bridge, a working man in an excellent speech, said, "It was necessary that those who had charge of the State should be possessed of great foresight; that they should be able to see further than into the middle of next week. He would illustrate this by a story he once heard. A stranger who had gone to the top of Crowhill, in Sowerby, was lost in admiration of the extensive view to be obtained from the summit, when he came across a farmer. He asked the farmer how far he could see from the hill on a clear day. The latter replied, 'Oh, a long way.' 'Can you see as far as York?' asked the stranger. 'Oh, further than that.' 'Well, can you see as far as London?' 'Further than that,' was the reply. 'Well,' said the stranger, in astonishment, 'how far can you see?' 'I don't know,' said the farmer, 'but I can see the moon on a clear night.' Now he, the speaker, thought that if Lord Salisbury could not see as far ahead as that, at any rate we should be thankful for the foresight he displayed while in power."

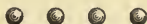


A Conservative speaker dealing with the war tried to impress the audience by dwelling on the fact that he had several relations who had been to the front, "indeed, one of them had been mortally wounded in the Transvaal." A lady sympathiser in the audience said, "Dear, dear, what part of his body was that, sir?"



A servant girl was sent for herrings—five for threepence. As the shopman wrapped them up, he remarked, "They have got Cronje." The girl ran home, saying to her master, a political ward secretary, "Will they do, sir; I'm afraid they are not quite fresh, the man said they had got Cronje!"

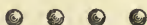
Colonel Saunderson, M.P., made the House yell one night by saying, "I shall follow the example of an excellent Irish friend of mine, who in a 'pregnant' bull announced that he could record his vote by 'walking out of the House.'"



It was Lord Monkswell, the new Chairman of the London County Council, who once unconsciously revealed Lord Salisbury to the House of Lords as a humorist. Lord Monkswell had introduced a Bill which he named the Burial Authorities (Cremation) Bill, and when he had sat down, the then Prime Minister got up and asked what burial authorities Lord Monkswell proposed to cremate? The joke killed the title. It was more fatal than Lord Salisbury's joke with Sir Hiram Maxim. The Prime Minister was talking with the inventor of the Maxim gun, when the King—then Prince of Wales—came up, and Lord Salisbury, addressing the Prince, said, "I was just telling Mr. Maxim that he had prevented more men from dying of old age than any other man who ever lived!"

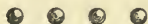


"The time has now arrived, and is fast approaching," declared another noble lord, "when we must be prepared to follow in the footsteps of those coming after us." And one noble lord greatly amazed the House by commencing a speech with these words: "My lords, I will even go so far as to venture to think."

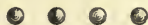


Mark Twain tells how he once scored off a political chum of his at a time when his friend was rector of a church at Hartford, Connecticut. "I say, Doctor," said the humorist, meeting the rector after service, "I enjoyed that sermon of yours immensely. I welcomed it like an old friend. I have, you know, a book at home, containing every word of it." "How dare you, sir," said the rector; "you know you have not!" "Oh, but I have," said Mark, in his most imperturbable manner. "Well," said the rector angrily, "send the book to me. I'd like to see it." "Done," said Mark. The next morning he sent the indignant rector a copy of Webster's unabridged dictionary.

At a Primrose League open meeting and concert, full of working men and women, where Lady Folkestone was to lead the singing of the National Anthem, her husband, who presided, noticed a man in the gallery with his hat on. He motioned to his wife to stop, and said: "I observe a man up there with his hat on; I never allow my missus to sing 'God Save the Queen' unless all the audience uncover." Enthusiastic cheers followed the announcement, and the man took his hat off.

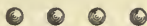


Mr. Arthur Priestley, M.P., who has been indulging in a carriage accident, was returned as a Liberal for Grantham in 1900. He is an industrious cricketer, who has played in America, Australia, and the West Indies, and generally to be found at Lord's in the summer when he is in town. Once during his electioneering experiences Mr. Priestley had rather an amusing encounter with a heckler. The man kept continually interrupting, and at last the candidate turned to him and said, "Look here, my friend, supposing you were in my place and I interrupted you, what would you do?" "Blooming well knock you down!" said the heckler naively. "Then just step up here and I'll do it," said the candidate, pleasantly. Mr. Priestley is not very big, but he is a trained athlete, and his physical development is rather remarkable. His well-meant offer was not accepted.



"I warn you I'm rather a trouble to get out of bed in the morning," said a well-known Manchester Conservative lecturer, "but I absolutely must get up in time to catch the 6.30 train home to-morrow." "Do my best, sir, said the boots." The following morning he commenced hammering at the politician's door at 5.30 a.m. It was useless, however. The door was locked and the guest would do no more than answer sleepily and go on snoring. At six o'clock boots was again at the door. "If you please, sir, I've got a most important letter for you." Eh—what's that?" said the sluggard, somewhat startled. "Letter this time in the morning?" He got out of bed and took the important-looking envelope. Wondering what on earth its contents could be, he tore it open. There was a sheet of paper inside, and on it was written in large letters, "Why don't you get up." And he got up.

Mr. Wild, Conservative candidate for Norwich, referring to his opponents many promises, said:—"He, too, had read an election address, issued by a gentleman not a hundred miles from there. This address was a regular programme. It reminded him of a story of a doctor in Yorkshire who applied for a general boy. To the lad who came in answer to the advertisement the doctor said, 'Of course, you can drive,' and the boy said, 'Yes, sir.' The doctor went on, 'You can milk the cows, clean the bicycle, and attend to the general rough work.' The boy again replied in the affirmative. 'And you can clean my typewriter, and act as my general valet?' queried the doctor. 'Yes, sir,' the boy again replied. 'You seem a nice boy,' remarked the doctor, 'why were you dismissed from your last place?' 'Because there was not enough work to do,' answered the lad. 'Well, my lad,' said the doctor finally, 'you may consider yourself engaged.' 'There is one thing I want to ask,' rejoined the lad; 'is this house built upon clay?' 'No,' replied the doctor, 'it is built upon gravel.' 'Well, it won't do for me, because in my spare time I want to make bricks,' was the lad's answer. (Loud laughter.) He (Mr. Wild) had a sort of suspicion that they were making bricks in St. Andrew's Hall at that moment. (Laughter.) And probably they would be bricks with straw." (Laughter.)

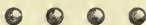


At a Primrose League meeting a man, speaking on women's rights, said: "I see no reason why women should not become medical men."

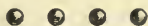


It is told of Chauncey Depew, the famous American orator and after-dinner speaker, that he proved of considerable interest to the small boy of a family on whom he once made a call. After dinner he and the head of the house were closeted together for two hours or longer. When Depew had departed the boy inquired the identity of the important-looking visitor. "That, my son, is Chauncey Depew, the greatest story-teller in America," explained the father. The business that had kept Depew and the father closeted together for so long brought the former back in a few days. The boy was playing near the house as Depew approached, and, running up to the visitor, exclaimed, "I'll go and tell daddy you're coming. I know who you are—Mr. Depew, the greatest liar in America!"

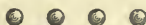
Mr. Sim Schofield, the Liberal Registration Agent for the Prestwich Division, told an interesting anecdote some time ago to a large Failsworth audience about old John Moore, a well-known Failsworth character. Together they went to a political conference at Leeds, and a conversazione was being held. Old John said he "hadna bin to sich mack a' things before," and wanted instruction as to how he must go about. Mr. Schofield impressed upon him the necessity of being very polite, and when John was going into the room he was met by a flunkey, who asked him his name. Very innocently he replied, "Sir John Moore." The flunkey announced "Sir John Moore," and there was a great stir in the room, everyone wondering if there had been a resurrection, and Sir John Moore had come to life again. In his way, old John Moore was being polite, but he had not stopped to punctuate after the word "Sir."



It was at a Primrose League meeting at Hornby where we made a collection for the "Absent-minded Beggar" Fund. I held up my hand, and inquired if anyone had lost his or her purse? After searching examination all admitted having their purses safe, so the Chairman said, "We will now make the collection, then."



Ridiculing what the opposition candidate claimed to have done, I heard a speaker relate a story of a pensioner who used to stand with a placard on his breast enumerating his claims to the coppers he begged. The list ran thus:—Battles 4, wounded 5, children 6, total 15.



There is a story of a commercial traveller being charged 6d. for notepaper in his hotel bill, and when he complained he had had no notepaper, the waiter said: "Perhaps it is for the paper on which the account is made out, sir!" That seems far-fetched, but I once had to complain of an attempt to charge me "1s. 6d. for fire in your room," and only got it rectified by personally conducting the manageress to show her that there was absolutely no fireplace in the room I had been in.

Speaking on Lord Peel's report on the liquor question a friend of mine astonished both those on the platform and in the audience by declaring himself in favour of total abstinence. He said, "Total abstinence is so excellent that it is impossible to carry its principles to too great a length. I therefore totally abstain—even from total abstinence."



A man who promised his vote to the Conservatives, and ten minutes later to the Liberals, was taken to task by his wife. He replied: "Did you not notice how pleased each of them was?" "Yes." "Well, I pleased them both, and when polling day comes I'll please myself, and we shall all be pleased together."



A great uproar was created at a meeting I was at in the North by a speaker applying these lines to a local opponent:—

"Here lie the bones of Robert Lowe,
Where he's gone to I don't know,
If to the realms of light and love
Farewell to happiness above;
If, haply, to some lower level,
I can't congratulate the devil."

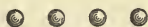


Two politicians were chatting. One said, "My wife looks after me splendidly, old fellow; she even takes off my boots for me." "When you come home from the club, no doubt?" "No—when I want to go there!"

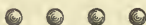


I once took part in a public debate, and it was agreed to have "an impartial chairman," and that "no vote should be taken by the audience." Concluding the proceedings in response to the usual civilities, the chairman said: "If you believe what the Conservative gentleman has said you will naturally go away and support his side; but if, on the other hand, you believe the Liberal gentleman, then your verdict will be in his favour. But, if you are like me, and don't believe either of them, then I'll be hanged if I know what you will do." He proved his impartiality and sent the audience away in a good temper.

An election petition was being tried, and a witness was called to prove bribery. "One of the gentlemen says to me, says he, 'Hodge, you must vote for the Tories.'" "And what did you answer to that?" "'Well,' says I, 'how much?'" "And what did the agent say?" "He didn't say nothin'." Then t'other gentleman comes to me and says, 'You must vote for the Liberal, Hodge.'" "And what did you answer?" "I said, 'How much?' So he arst me what t'other gent. offered, and I told him five shillings." "And what did the Liberal agent do?" "He give me ten." Counsel sits down triumphant, and up starts the other side. "Did you vote for the Tories?" "No." "Did you vote for the Liberals?" "No. I ain't got a vote."



Admitting that Lord Salisbury's Government was not a perfect Government, the speaker added: "We never have had a perfect Government, nor have I ever seen a perfect man. Has anyone ever heard of a perfect woman?" A chubby-faced woman got up and said, "Yes, there was one. I have often heard of her. But she's dead now. She was my husband's first wife."

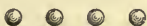


Sir George Bartley, M.P., said that Mr. Chaplin had referred to Mr. Chamberlain as the greatest of statesmen; but then a fisherman was never a judge of the size and weight of a salmon he had caught himself."

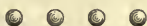


A Conservative friend told me a dodge he was once compelled to practice. He had spoken so often on the Disestablishment question that he knew certain quotations by memory. One night his bag went astray, with all his books and papers and proofs. He told the hallkeeper to put several big books of any sort on the platform table, and he found three old directories there when speaking. One persistent interruptor demanded proof for statements re tithes. Asking if he would accept Seldon as an authority, and getting an affirmative reply, the lecturer got hold of the dirtiest directory, and proceeded to quote "Seldon on Tithes, page —." This he repeated three times so effectually as to silence all further opposition. Instead of arguing the morality of the proceeding, I am compelled to confess to laughing at the trick, my friend saying he would stake his life on the correctness of the quotations.

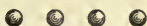
At a meeting where I lectured all the other speakers dealt with local politics. One told a yarn about his opponent which is worth quoting. In the Council a debate had taken place as to utilising a large lake in the park, and the suggestion was made to provide a gondola. This wiseacre proposed that the "Council buy two, and then they could breed from them."



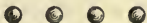
A comical man, proposing a vote of thanks to me, took occasion to back up my remarks about the influence of women, and horrified the great majority of those present by declaring he ought to know, as "he had buried seventeen wives." It was explained afterwards that he was a gravedigger.



After I had made what was termed an "amusing speech," an old gentleman, in moving a vote of thanks, told a story about a 'bus driver going over Holborn Viaduct, London, and pointing to the City Temple, said: "That's the man and that's the place," indicating Dr. Parker's church. "I went there once, and enjoyed myself so much that I'm going again the first night off I have. We laughed and we cried, and we had a rare time. You see," continued the driver, "he don't take religion so damned serious!"

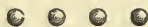


In the course of a political lecture, illustrated with a magic-lantern, delivered in a country village just after the Berlin Congress, the picture representing Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury returning in triumph from Berlin, with the words "Peace with Honour" underneath, was thrown upon the screen. An old lady among the audience, whose head was full of recollections of a notorious criminal, innocently inquired, amid great laughter, "Which is Peace?"

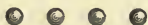


A recent peroration of a legislator is thus reported:—"The torch of progress has not yet many leaves to be turned over, for the thin end of the wedge of labour was as yet hardly visible above the surface of the waves of time; but he hoped to live to see both of them waving proudly over a united, a happy, and a free England."

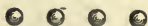
Gentlemen who are useful members of society in an ordinary way often lose their heads when acting as chairmen at public meetings. They will yarn on with "finally, one word more," "that just reminds me," "last of all," and "in conclusion," tiring the people before the speaker gets a chance. Scores of times have I been reminded of the lecturer who when called upon to give his address said: "Certainly, gentlemen, as it is almost train time, and there is not time for more. My address is 100, Meadowside, Cheltenham."



Mr. S. Whitfield, a farmer of Firshy, put himself forward as a candidate for the School Board at Conisborough in 1890. Here is an extract from his election address:—"Politically I have only the choice of two evils. For upwards of twenty years I have chosen the Tory as the lesser. An old adage is 'When rogues fall out honest men come by their own.' So when Rads and Tories are squabbling is the only time to look out for a 'sop.' Nevertheless, I prefer sailing in the old 'Tory,' because she is A1 at Lloyd's, copper bottomed, a patriotic crew, ballast sufficient to prevent her pitching and rolling with every adverse breeze. Having such a splendidly equipped vessel to embark in, the 'Rebellion,' shattered as she is with sedition, floating on Parnellite juice, an insubordinate crew, steeped to the lips in crime, wading through rapine and murder, depriving fellow-passengers of all liberty; a cargo of dynamite (vide the Grand Old Weathercock), to be scuttled and swamped, whilst valiant Captain Jabez Balfour has skedaddled by the first cable that would land him in St. Stephen's."

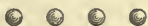


When Mr. Arthur Balfour was Chief Secretary for Ireland he visited many parts of that country. One old farmer asked him, "Have you seen the sow?" "No," replied the genial Chief Secretary. After showing him the wonderful animal, Paddy calmly said: "We've called it Arthur, in honour of you, sir."



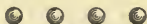
Parliamentary candidate (dictating indignant letter): "Sir, my typewriter being a lady, cannot take down what I think of you. I, being a gentleman, cannot think it; but you, being neither, can easily guess my thoughts."

The two following incidents are best told in the language of the reporter who recorded a speech I made at Stalmine:—“Mr. J. H. Bottomley followed with a humorous address. Pointing to an intoxicated nigger close to him, in ragged clothing, and very much ‘down at heel,’ he said, ‘This man is a convert.’ (Laughter.) When Mr. Aver was saying ‘There were too many public-houses in the country,’ this very black gentleman took him (Mr. Bottomley) by the arm, and whispered, ‘I agree with that. I’se on your side. I’se agwine to turn over a new leaf. I give my heart to God, I won’t touch drink any more.’ He thought he was at a teetotal meeting. (Roars of laughter.) Their dusky friend would bear him out in that statement. The nigger shook hands with Mr. Bottomley, Mr. Aver, and the Chairman, said good night to the company, and went straight across the road, and deliberately walked into the public-house, to the intense amusement of the crowd.



“Mr. Bottomley said Mr. Aver had stated that he had not been opposed or obstructed anywhere. That was partially correct. (Laughter.) True, no men or women had interfered with his speech, but at Hambleton they had an amusing experience. They fixed their tent—their platform—in a farmyard under a tree weighted down with blossom. Immediately Mr. Aver began to speak, and the audience to applaud it was discovered there was a cock and four hens perched high up in the tree. The cock crew, and the hens cackled, and the blossom fell like snowflakes. The voice of the poultry and the laughter of the audience woke up a lot of ducks, who in turn aroused the ire of some pigs, and all through the address the crowing of cocks, the cackling of hens, and the grunting of pigs, and the flying about of pigeons, and the barking of dogs was very disconcerting, but the lecturer managed by mere force of eloquence to hold his audience in a most interested manner. But it was very funny, and most amusing, to find at the finish that when he (Mr. Bottomley) was called upon to propose a vote of thanks all the noise and hubbub ceased, and the only possible explanation seemed to be that Mr. Aver was a Londoner, and he a Lancashire lad. The farmyard denizens recognised his dialect, remembered they were natives, probably understood his remarks, and came to the conclusion ‘This chap is all right, now we can go to sleep.’” (Continued laughter.)

Lord Henry Bentinck, when contesting a seat in Norfolk, ventured to ask a man who was thought to be a Radical if there was any chance of his getting his vote. "I'd sooner vote for the devil," said the intelligent possessor of the franchise. Lord Henry quietly rejoined, "If, however, your friend should not stand, perhaps you will support me."



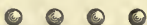
Mr. J. W. Lodge, the unsuccessful candidate in a recent County Council election at Sowerby Bridge, under the head of miscellaneous expenses, has inserted:—"To satisfying the needs and demands of a lot of idle, loafing, political, dissenting parsons (who are fast becoming 'the pestilence that walketh at noonday'), in order to secure their influence with the electors on my behalf, £0 0s. 0d."



A rather pompous orator rose on one occasion to make an extended speech at an electioneering meeting. He began in this rather sententious fashion, "Mr. Chairman, I have lived long enough—" "Hear, hear," yelled a member of the audience, and such a storm of laughter broke out that the aspirant for Parliamentary honours was forced to resume his seat.

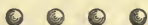


An American senator recently returned from a European tour took a story back with him of the London 'bus conductor. One very rainy day the senator got into an omnibus. By-and-by he noticed the rain coming through the roof on to his head. When the conductor came in for the fare he tackled him about it. "Say," he said, "what's the matter with the roof, does it always do this." "No," said the conductor, "only when it rains."

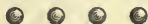


Mr. G. Whiteley, M.P., was endeavouring to ridicule the Tariff Reformers' statements, at a debate in London, over which he presided. He asked, "Is there a single woman here with four or five children?" Mr. Pettifer, rising, caused screams of laughter by saying, "This is no place for me!" Mr. Whiteley failed to see the joke, until Mr. P. inquired "What is a single woman doing with so many children?"

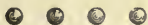
A good deal of amusement has been aroused among members on both sides by the fact that Mr. Winston Churchill has distributed widely among his colleagues a copy of his recent speeches in the House of Commons. Mr. T. L. Corbett, the Unionist member for North Devon, has acknowledged the gift in a manner which fairly illustrates the general feeling on the subject. He says: "Dear Mr. Churchill,—Thanks for the copy of your speeches lately delivered in the House of Commons. To quote the late Lord Beaconsfield, 'I shall lose no time in reading them.'"



A Labour M.P. tells this funny story against himself. He once rebuked a man of sullen temper for blowing clouds in a "non-smoker." "This is not a smoking carriage," he observed, rather wrathfully. "I know that, old 'un," grumbled the stolid one, "but I be a-gooing on with this 'ere smoke." His M.P.-ship's temperature rose spontaneously. He passed the yokel his card, on which were proudly printed mystic letters "M.P.," and said he would report him at the next station. When the next stopping-place was reached, the yokel quickly changed into another carriage, and the Labour leader sent the guard to get his name and address, as he intended to prosecute him. The guard went to the yokel's compartment, and returned to the growler and whispered, "If I were you I would not prosecute that gent; he has just given me his card—here it is—and he is Mr. —, M.P."



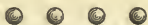
At one of Mr. Dixon's meetings in the Harborough Division Sir Carne Rasch, the champion of short speeches in the House of Commons, was put up to talk against time. At the end of half an hour he exclaimed, "We've got to talk till Mr. Dixon or the Day of Judgment comes, and, — it, if I don't think one will be here as soon as the other."



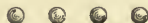
"A Poet" writes me, saying:—

"Can politics rank as a paying profession,
When seats in the House are so dear a possession,
And Helme takes pains to convince the outsider
That 'M.P.' stands chiefly for 'money provider?'"

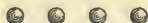
A political lecturer one day arrived at a forlorn country inn, and addressing a waiter, inquired if he could have a chicken and asparagus. The serving man shook his head. "Can I have duck, then?" "No, sir." "Have you any mutton chops?" "Not one, sir." "Then, as you have no eatables, bring me something to drink. Have you any wine?" "Sir," replied the man with a profound sigh, "we are out of wines." "Then in wonder's name what have you got in the house?" "Bailiffs, sir!" answered the waiter.



Commencing a contest, a friend of mine, as candidate, explained that whatever provocation was given he should not retaliate. "If my opponents call me a liar, I shall simply ask them to prove it, and if they do so, I shall be ashamed, and if they don't they ought to be ashamed of themselves."



Mr. Asquith, M.P., in an address recently delivered in London, made felicitous use of English when pleading for better linguistic culture. He took occasion to condemn "the uncouth and pseudo-classical terminology of the men of science, the tortuous and nebulous phrases of philosophers, the pretentious conventionalities of the art critic, and the slipshod slapdash of the newest school of journalists."



I met an idiot who said, "Have you heard the story of 288?" "No," I answered, interestedly, "what is it?" "Oh, it is good enough for your 'Buzzings' in 'England,' but it's too gross entirely." "Fire away," I exclaimed, thinking it was going to be a bit spicy. "Well," replied the escaped lunatic, "144 is one gross, and 288 is two gross, isn't it?"



Taking a walk with a gentleman with whom I was staying, after a lecture, we came across some children playing, and one of them was insolent. He pulled his ears and demanded, "Do you know who I am?" "Yes," replied the boy, who it appeared belonged to the coachman, "you're the man as rides in father's carriage!"

Here is a copy of a marked phrenological chart issued by one of the candidates at an election against his opponent:—

“ACTIVITY.—You are always in motion and as restless as the wind. Restrain yourself, try and be lazy, rest on your laurels.

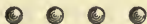
“DESTRUCTIVENESS.—You have a great disposition to break, crush, and tear down. Cultivate better manners, think over the past, and learn lessons.”

“CONSTRUCTIVENESS.—You are very deficient here: whatever you attempt is awkwardly done. Cultivate this organ, and try to do better in the future than in the past. Remember it takes a man with brains to construct; any fool can destroy.

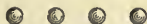
“LANGUAGE.—You will do well to restrain your passion for excessive talkativeness; lop off redundancies and pleonasms.

“SELF-ESTEEM.—You have a ‘large’ respect for self. You have more ambition than talent, and are proud, pompous, supercilious, and imperious. A little modesty would improve you, and it would be well to remember that you are one of the greatest blunderers in the nineteenth century.

“CONTINUITY.—Here you are ‘very small.’ You crave novelty and variety, and continually have too many irons in the fire; lack steadiness and consistency of character. Endeavour to prevent your thoughts wandering, cultivate continuity in thought and deed.”

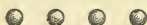


At an election at Paisley, the popular candidate waited on a shoemaker to solicit his vote. “Get out of my house, sir,” said the shoemaker; and the gentleman was forced to retire accordingly. The cobbler, however, followed him, saying, “You turned me off your estate, sir, and I was determined to turn you out of my house; but for all that I shall give you my vote.”

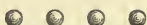


Moving a vote of thanks to me at Burnley, a fine young man who had volunteered to go to the war, but had been rejected for his bad teeth, said, “I thought I should have to shoot the Boers; I had no idea I should be expected to worry them!”

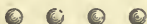
It is said that when Lady Randolph Churchill was canvassing Woodstock at the time Lord Randolph was made Chancellor of the Exchequer, she called on a Radical working man, asking for his support. He bluntly replied, "No, certainly not; I should never think of voting for a lazy fellow who never leaves his bed until dinner time." The lady assured him he was wrongly informed, adding, "As I happen to be his wife my evidence ought to be conclusive." "Lor, mam," he at once replied, "if you were my wife, I should never get up!"



Mr. O. L. Clare, K.C., the Conservative M.P. for Eccles, was amused at a working man chairman in a mining part of his constituency introducing him to the meeting as "Mr. Ho Hell Clare!"

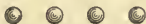


Some years ago, as most people know, Mr. Justin McCarthy was M.P. for Londonderry City. At the General Election of 1886 he opposed the sitting member, Mr. C. E. Lewis. All was seething excitement in the room where the counting of votes was in progress, and below the crowd was in a similar state. The count was finished, and those inside knew the result. A Conservative agent, whose excitement was at boiling point, could stand the strain no longer. He opened a window and shouted out to the crowd below, "Just in! Just out!" That was enough for the crowd outside, and the uproar was tremendous. Mr. McCarthy had been beaten by a majority of three. As may be readily understood, the official announcement afterwards fell flat.

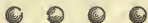


Mr. Aspinall, a clever and reckless barrister, famous in the sixties in Victoria for his fun and audacity, was addressing an election meeting in Ballarat, the "golden city." The lively advocate had come to that time in his career when much whisky and soda had wrought palpable havoc with his complexion. His speech ended, and questions invited. "Aspinall," bellowed a stalwart digger, "tell us what makes your face so red." "Blushing at your — impudence, sir" was the quick reply. It carried the meeting.

They have no black list in Scotland, or the heroine of this story, which appears in an Edinburgh paper, would deserve to be put on it. The conversation took place in a public-house, and the participants were two women. First wife: "What's your husband?" Second ditto: "Oh, he's a Liberal! What's yours?" First wife: "A sma' whisky."



It is related of a member of the National Liberal Club that he had the misfortune to lose a cherished umbrella. Whereupon he caused the following notice to be appended to the board of green baize:—"Will the nobleman who took a brown silk umbrella with staghorn handle, kindly return it, care of the hall-porter?" The committee intimated their resentment of what they considered a libel on the club. To which the accused retorted that his announcement was framed in accordance with the rules of the club, for (as he proceeded to point out to the committee) by Rule I.: "This club is formed for the membership of noblemen and gentlemen." "Now," said he, "no gentleman would have taken my brolly; so it must have been a nobleman."

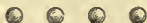


The candidate was young, and his engagement to a popular and pretty local girl was well known. She was sitting prominently on his platform one night while he was in the hands of the hecklers. "When are ye gittin' mairit?" shouted a heartless voter. The meeting chuckled, while the young lady flushed crimson, and gazed at her shoes. The candidate, though obviously nonplussed, had plenty of grit, and he bluntly retorted, in confidential tones, "Look here, gentlemen, it depends on this contest. Someone in the vicinity has promised to let me fix the day if I am elected." The meeting cheered rapturously, and it is pleasant to recall that that young fellow was elected.

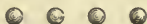


Scene: A restaurant. A seedy-looking person has dined off roast beef. The waitress presents the bill. Diner: "What! A shilling for a plate of beef! What does this mean?" Waitress: "It is according to the tariff, sir." (Showing it.) Diner: "Tariff! I don't want no blooming tariff! I'm a Free Fooder. (Exit, without paying.)

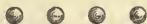
I heard a well-known Cabinet Minister tell this story. He remembered a lych-gate in front of a beautiful church which had been restored and made very nice. There was painted over the door, "This is th Gate of Heaven," and underneath was the large notice, "Go round the other way."



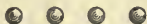
Speaking at a meeting, an old gentleman said he hoped all would work hard to return their candidate; he would, although he had no "particular influence." He was wild because an enemy in the audience cried out "Hear, hear."



"Up to this election I was looked upon as a true blue Tory, but I am to-day a Liberal Conservative." An inquisitive opponent, with the evident intention of flooring his Lordship, asked the candidate "What is a Liberal Conservative?" "I will tell you," said the candidate, "what a Liberal Conservative is in two words—Lord Elcho."



Speaking of a splendid military candidate, a friend of mine referred to him, saying, "On the battlefield he was always to be found where the bullets were thickest." "Where was that?" asked one of the audience. "In the ammunition waggon," yelled a Radical.

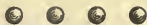


A Conservative candidate who was a poor speaker, after reciting a speech he had delivered at several other places, said with great emphasis, as a clincher to an argument, "I will add no more." "Because you cannot," said an opponent.

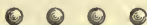


At a meeting near Huddersfield, I asked the audience to be Conservative, and a Radical in front said, "We working chaps has nowt to conserve." Whereupon a Tory next him brought down the house by shouting, "If you have nowt, how the devil can you be Liberal aud give something?"

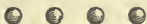
At one of my Revision Courts a woman appeared to meet a Liberal objector. The Radical agent said, "How long is it since you heard from your husband?" Woman: "My husband? I have never heard from him since he died," causing all in court to roar with laughter.



At a bye-election in Barnsley Division we were naturally making much of the "Times" revelations re the Parnell letters. The Liberals had evidently been knocked up during the night, for on awakening in the morning we were thunderstruck on looking out of the window to see all over the place great bills with the announcement, "Pigott's flown." Our hope and stay had disappeared, and so had our chances of success.

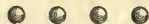


The inhabitants of Newport, a village three miles from Saffron Walden, put their parish pump into mourning. They dressed it up in an old frock-coat, a battered silk hat, a tattered umbrella, hung a black flag at half-mast over its head, and a wreath of ivy around its spout. Attached to the wreath they put an "In Memoriam" card, with the inscription, "In kind and affectionate remembrance of our dear old friend, the Mile-stone Pump, who died through having his arm taken off. Deeply lamented by a large circle of friends." The pump had been closed by order of the Saffron Walden District Council.

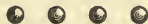


Mr. C. Lowther, M.P. for North Cumberland, being called upon for a speech at a Primrose League meeting at Upperby, said he had jotted down the names of a few songs he might sing if required, and also a few headings of the political topics on which he might touch. But on looking at his notes he found that the result was disastrous, and that the amalgamation of music and politics was almost dangerous. This was what he found:--"Vacillating policy of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman," and then the song, "First he would and then he wouldn't." (Laughter.) The notes went on: "Mr. John Morley's present state." "A little bit off the top." (Laughter.) "Give Mr. Willie Redmond his deserts." "Two lovely black eyes." (Laughter.) Finally he saw something about "Mr. Chamberlain's policy." "Britannia rules the waves." (Applause.)

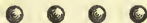
A well-known politician who had been invited to serve as a substitute at a recent election meeting felt some nervousness, knowing he was to fill the place of a more famous man. This feeling was not diminished when he heard himself thus announced by the long-limbed, keen-eyed farmer chairman, "This 'ere is our substitute. I don't know what he kin do. Time was short, an' we had to take what we could git!"



A certain married lady sat up till twelve o'clock one night waiting for her husband to come home from the Reform Club. At last, weary and worn out with waiting, she went to her bedroom to retire and found the missing husband sound asleep. Instead of going to the club he had gone to his room and never left the house. Such are the troubles some married women have to contend with in this life.

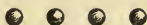


A South Wales Conservative agent tells me of one of his committee who was recently on a visit to London, and presented himself at the clerk's desk in a hotel. After having a room assigned to him, he inquired at what hours meals were served. "Breakfast from seven to eleven, luncheon from eleven to three, dinner from three to eight, supper from eight to eleven," recited the clerk, glibly. "Good heavens!" said the Rhonddaite; "when am I goin' to get time to see the sights of London?"

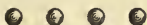


A good election story reaches me from a Midland town. During the polling an active supporter of one of the candidates saw an elderly inhabitant strolling leisurely along the street, and, amazed at such lack of interest in local politics, hastened to him and asked what he meant by not voting. Hardly giving time for a reply, he hurried off his capture to a neighbouring public-house and ordered "drinks." When these had been consumed, he turned to the apathetic one and said, "Now go and vote for——!" His chagrin may be imagined when there came the reply, "I ain't got a vote."

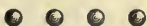
I lost my handbag with a valuable scrap book in it. A thought struck me in the train, so I wired to the local Conservative agent, who knew of my loss. Instead of my bag I received an indignant letter asking what I meant by telegraphing to him "Go to hell and see keeper." The operator or clerk had unfortunately put the wrong vowel in the word "hall," and consequently my friend thought I ought to be in the hands of a "keeper."



The late Mr. Robert Ascroft, M.P., was an inveterate smoker, and clung to a half-crown briar which many, many months of constant smoking had rendered foul with nicotine, the bowl of which had been burnt and cut half down, the stem of which was pierced by repeatedly sharp grips between the teeth. One day Mr. Ascroft left this pipe in the room of a friend of mine, who tells the story: "I picked it up, and locked it away in an unused drawer and went home wondering what Mr. Ascroft would do all the weary long evenings in the House without his pipe. When I arrived at the office at ten the next morning I found a telegram awaiting me. It had been handed in at 8 a.m. It read: 'Left my pipe your office yesterday. Had sleepless night. Send at once by special messenger, or I denounce you as thief and indict you as murderer.—Ashcroft.'"

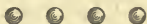


Responding to a vote of thanks, a prosy old chairman said, "It was an awful trial for me to make that speech to-night," when a voice interrupted, "Don't mention it, old boy; just think what the rest of us suffered."



A well-known member of the Lancaster Corporation was in Liverpool on the 13th of March, 1900, and was interested in watching the enormous sale of the evening papers. One man in particular—a rough, uncouth, hobbledehoy—after yelling out the contents of his paper, was besieged by people asking for papers and change. Getting free at last, he seemed dazed, and stood stock still as in a dream. Our friend asked him if he had lost something, and the reply came, "I'm d—d if I haven't forgot what there is in the paper—what I was shouting!" On being told, he rushed away yelling lustily, "Capture of Blooming-fonting!"

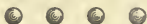
I know a gentleman who went to speak at Chester, and after his meeting, it being a grand night, he asked the hotel waiter what he could do with himself. "A stroll on the walls would be enjoyable." "What do you take me for—a tom cat?"



A collier in the North took the measure of a Radical candidate for a mining constituency, after setting a snare for him. Getting a lot of favourable answers, he asked: "Will you vote for the removal of headstocks?" The candidate at once replied, "Certainly I will." Now, as the removal of the headstocks would mean the closing of the pits, the miner's little joke was greatly enjoyed.



An equally ridiculous story is told of a Tory candidate, who had been dining. A troublesome man put the question, "Would you, if returned to Parliament, vote for the immediate total and unconditional repeal of the Decalogue?" "With all my heart," said the mixed one. He turned to his agent to ask what he had done to cause such great laughter. "Done!" said his adviser, "you've only promised to abolish the ten commandments!"

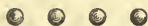


The wife of a Conservative candidate was called upon unexpectedly one night to say a few words, and right well she responded: "The electors would be asked on the election day whether they would take her husband or leave him. A good many years ago she had to decide a similar question. They all knew how she decided. Example was better than precept, and the electors could not do better than follow her example and take him. She had never regretted it, and she was sure they never would."

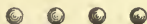


Nothing so annoys a speaker as coughing. Let one person start a cough, and the whole audience immediately catches the disease. I have heard one lecturer in the middle of his address announce, "There will now be five minutes interval for coughing," whilst another one inquired if no one in that town sold cough lozenges.

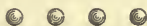
I was staying with a friend, and before going to the lecture we had dinner. My host was in a very grumpy mood. I was awfully sorry to think it would be rude to laugh outright when he said, "This pudding isn't fit for a pig to eat!" and his charming wife smilingly replied, "Then I wouldn't eat it, my dear!"



Another bad tempered man I remember. We were going to a meeting on a branch line, and a lot of shunting operations were taking place. "What in the world are we waiting for, now?" said the irascible. The guard replied smartly, "The Board of Trade regulations won't allow us to start a train, sir, without an engine."



A florist received an order from a political agent for a floral device, ornamented with a silk ribbon, upon each side of which the following inscription was directed to be placed:—"Rest in Peace." When the flowers and ribbon arrived, the latter was inscribed, "Rest in peace on both sides."



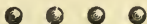
The late Mr. Gladstone, at Leeds, said, "I am by blood a Scotsman; I am by residence a Londoner; I am by marriage a Welshman; and I am by birth a Lancashire man. I almost feel in coming amongst you as I were a Yorkshireman." A poetical friend sent me for use these really good lines:—

Seven cities there were in the centuries old
 Claimed Homer's place of birth,
 But our Grand Old Man, as we've often been told,
 Was born all over the earth;
 I'm English, I'm Irish, I'm Welsh, and I'm Scotch,
 I was born wherever I spout;
 I'm Italian in Florence; in Holland I'm Dutch;
 I'm the best born man that's about.

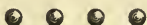
Chorus:

He's the best born man that's about,
 Of that there's no shadow of doubt;
 But we'll lose our seats if that Bill he repeats,
 This best born man that's about.

Another abominable habit of an audience is to turn round, however interesting the lecturer, to see who comes in late if the door creaks. A speaker once said:—"Ladies and gentlemen,—I will make a bargain with you. I will get the committee to put a little oil on the hinges of that door, and if anything more extraordinary enters by the door than an ordinary human being, I'll let you know."



A Primrose dame told me when cavassing in a country village in Wiltshire she said, "Just give your vote to Lord Emlyn. You will never forget it. He will attend to your interests in the House of Commons—" New voter, interrupting, "Is that going on still, miss?"



Personation agents in polling booths are often very stupid. Not long ago an agent showed me a book in which he had written the word "dead" opposite to the name of the man who was his next door neighbour. The smart P.A. had written at the end of the line, "Your information is wrong; this man came to vote!" The idiot had never had the impersonator questioned as to whether he was the man described on the list.



When but a tyro at platform work I once had a peculiar experience. At that time I took the trouble to write out a lecture in full, and it was therefore no trouble when a reporter, the day before the meeting, which was on a Tuesday, asked the loan of the manuscript, as he did not want to go out to this particular meeting. Circumstances arose which made it imperative I should remain at home, or rather, in town, and a telegram was despatched calling for postponement of the meeting. On the Wednesday, at noon, I casually purchased the noon edition of the local evening paper, and was horrified to find a column and a half report of the lecture which had not been delivered, along with complimentary remarks which the chairman naturally didn't make. I hailed a cab, and very quickly had the report taken out. The reporter consoled me by remarking, "Anyone can report a meeting which did take place, but it requires genius to do what I have done for you!"

A friend sent me a copy of the "Lancet," telling "how to lie when asleep." He suggested it would do more good if it told some politicians how to keep from lying when awake.

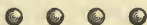
● ● ● ●

Mr. G. Harwood, Liberal M.P. for Bolton (who was once a clergyman) tells the following story about himself. When he was a curate he had a lot of visiting to do, and, remarked "I suppose I was considered to be green, like many curates are." In his district there resided an old lady named Mrs. Brown, who was in poor circumstances, and he occasionally gave her a small sum of money. As time went on he stopped, and the old lady dropped him various broad hints. On visiting her one day she exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Harwood, I was dreaming about you last night." Wishing to know what the nature of the dream was he gave her a shilling, and she informed him that she had dreamed he was a bishop. He told the story to his vicar, who replied, "Don't let that trouble you, she has had that same dream several times, and has told it all my curates."

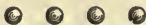
● ● ● ●

Mr. Augustine Birrell "put his foot into it" entertainingly at a Liberal agents' breakfast in Manchester. He gave a chaffing account of his experiences with election agents, how he had never known one to sit through one of the candidate's speeches, and how when questioned about it the agent invariably told the candidate that he had had something better to do, and so on. The agents enjoyed the "Birrelling" at their expense, but one of their number quietly hinted that it was about time Mr. Birrell made known the name of his agent at Bristol. This let the cat out of the bag. The chief Liberal Whip had been preaching the urgency of preparedness for an election, and the President of the Liberal Federation had delayed a highly essential point in completing his own organisation. Mr. Herbert Gladstone roused shouts of laughter by standing up to reprove "this enemy in our own camp," and Mr. Birrell kept the fun going by entering a cleverly evasive defence, and speaking a delightfully humorous appreciation of the election agent. "I have lived with him so much that I could not live without him; I have laughed at his jokes—a hard thing to do, but I did it; I have hearkened to his criticisms and obeyed his behests; and when I die the sincere tribute on my grave will be the tear that falls from his honest eye."

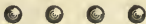
Mr. Leif Jones, if a little sharp-tongued at times, readily sees the humorous side of things. At Kehelland there was no Liberal chairman, and all the people in the audience were too modest to come to the front. Mr. Leif Jones thereupon proposed that Mr. Leif Jones take the chair; and afterwards solemnly called upon Mr. Leif Jones to speak. Then he said he did not like talking of Sir Wilfrid to his face. The candidate seized his arm and said, "Don't." "Well, I won't to his face," said Mr. Jones, who then turned his back upon him, and went on. At the close he raised another laugh by moving a vote of thanks to himself as chairman.



The following gem is from "The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland," by Mr. Michael Davitt. It is a letter forwarded to the offices of the Land League in the height of the Agrarian war:—"To the Honourable Land League,—Gintlemin, in a momint of wakeness i pade me rint. i did not no ther was a law against it, or i wud not do it. The people pass by me due as if the smal pox was in the hous. I heer ye do be givin pardons to min that do rong, and if ye will sind me a pardon to put in the windy for everyone to rede it, as God is me judge i will never kmit the crime agin. Mister Scrab Nally will give me a Karactheer if ye write to him.—Yours truly, ——".

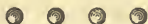


During the Budget discussion on the tea duties Mr. John Wilson, the miners' representative of Durham, declared that he believed that tea had tended to prolong life, and when protesting cries of "Oh" were raised Mr. Wilson added, "Well, at any rate, since I have taken tea I have lived longer than I ever did before."



Two old Lanarkshire politicians were recently complimenting each other on their temperate habits. "I'm gey shair, Sandy," said one, "that ye never saw me wi' mair than I could cairry, did ye?" "Weel, no," was the rejoinder, "I canna say that I hae. But I hae seen ye when I thocht ye wad hae been better to hae gane twice for it."

As a youth I remember conversing with a well-known political speaker—a lawyer, and timidly inquired why he repeated a certain statement so often. His reply was, "Tell a judge what you want him to hear; tell a jury three times; but hammer away at what you want a public meeting to grasp and understand."

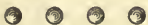


A good canvasser in Glasgow left some leaflets at a house, and was a little disconcerted on the election day, when fetching the voter, to find the daughter had used his literature as curl papers. "Weel, my lassie," he remarked, "I see you have used the tracts I left wi ye; but," he added in time to turn merriment into confusion, "Ye have putten them on the wrong side o' your heid, ma woman."



A poet sent me these lines:—

Three statesmen each of character sublime
Compared their watches lately for the time;
Duke Devonshire's was thought to be too slow,
Whilst Chamberlain's too rapidly did go;
When Balfour showed him, with delight,
"The Union Watch" was found exactly right.

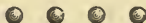


At a recent election the Radical candidate drove into a country village, and meeting what he considered a "yokel" who had a vote, said, "Well, old fellow, have you heard the news?" He replied "No." The candidate said, "Well, I'm going to be the Member of Parliament for this division." The voter eyed him all over, and then remarked, "It's like enuff; they mak' Parliament chaps of owt nowadays."

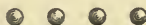


A Liberal lecturer, after replying to an address I had given, "put his foot in it" in a most laughable manner. He was displaying awful ignorance on agricultural topics, when a farmer's man said, "I don't believe you could tell malt from barley, if you saw them growing in the same field." Bumptuously the lecturer said, "Yes, I could by the difference in the leaves!"

A candidate and a lady friend met a man in their walk, whose name they did not recollect. The lady said, "My dear sir, my friend here has been disputing as to how you spell your name, and asked me to settle the point by asking you?" The man replied, "With two p's," and walked away.



A well-known political friend of mine lost an election through a placard the other side posted the day before the election, saying, "Don't vote for a man who only pays his labourers 15s. per week." The joke is that he did not employ any labourers at all. But the cowardly insinuation did its work.

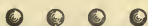


As a professional politician, I have naturally had little experience of canvassing, as, strange to say, Parliament has prohibited payment for what is, beyond question, the worst and most difficult and most odious class of work. Not very long ago I was pressed to call on a very doubtful voter, to see what could be made of him. He either did not, or would not, understand anything about either Liberals or Conservatives, and all I could get out of him was that "he should vote for Jesus Christ only!"

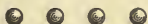


A lantern operator once came to the betting rooms, Doncaster, to work the slides for me at a lecture on Ireland. The slides were lent by a London firm, and only arrived half an hour before the meeting. I consequently had to depend on my friend to tell the names of each. He put in one which looked for all the world like a splendidly carved roof, and said, "Giant's Causeway." I hesitated, and he called out "Giant's Causeway." I gently hinted there must be some mistake, so he took it out, looked at the inscription, and again shouted "Giant's Causeway," and absolutely stood firm when I demanded another slide should be put in. I then walked to him and whispered, "I was at the Giant's Causeway only a month since, and that is not a bit like it," whereupon he pulled out the slide, and imperiously said, "Well, read it yourself." I took it in hand, held it up to the light, and found it was the Giant's Causeway, but he had continued to show the picture upside down!

Occasionally a speaker gets surprised by remarks from the audience, as for example:—I remember being at a meeting of colliers with the present Viceroy of India, the Right Hon. Lord Curzon, when he was plain Mr. George Curzon. Dwelling on his undoubted abilities, and following up the Chairman's remark that Mr. Curzon had a right to look forward to political preferment, I observed in a jocular way that "he had no doubt got his eye already on the Treasury Bench," whereupon the audience was convulsed by a remark. "Aye, and tha can bet half a dollar he'll jolly soon have his trowsers there, too!"



The late Sir Henry Smith, long M.P. for Colchester, was a Tory of the old school. On one occasion he was canvassing with some friends, and on asking a rough farmer for his support, the man replied, "I'd vote for you, Sir Henry, as usual, only you're such an old fool." "Fool, am I?" retorted the M.P., "then I'm the very man to represent you!"



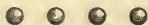
A Nonconformist clergyman recently gave a lecture in a Liberal club on "Fools." The tickets of admission were printed:—"Lecture on 'Fools'; admit one." The room was crowded.



I once went through Poole. When that way again I mean to get out at the station and call on Dr. H. A. Lawton, for did not he, at the debate on the Land Question, say:—"If they referred back to the Book of Genesis—(laughter)—they might laugh. He would have thought there was sufficient education amongst them to know there was such a book—if they referred to the third chapter of Genesis they would find there were tenant farmers (if they liked to call them such) in those days. The Lord planted a garden, and put two people in it, but there was one reservation—let one tree alone. That was the tithe and the rent of the landowner. ('Oh, oh!' and laughter.) What happened? There came the first Radical—no less a personage than the devil himself. (Renewed laughter.) He preached the doctrine that they had as much right to the fruit of the tree as the landowner had. They suffered eviction. The same lying spirit that was abroad in those days was abroad now." (Laughter.)

"I say, Bill, who was Benjamin Disraeli?"

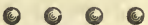
"Don't you know, stupid? He was the man who invented primroses."



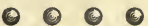
Mr. Runciman, the Liberal M.P. for Dewsbury, is rather a smart man, as for example. He was asked, "If elected, under whose umbrella will you serve—Campbell-Bannerman's, Asquith's, or Labouchere's?" He replied, "I think my own umbrella will suit Dewsbury very well."



I remember travelling on the L. C. and D. Railway and seeing a notice posted in the carriage saying, "Passengers are requested not to put their feet on the cushions." Two wags had evidently been at work. One had crossed out "feet" and put "seats," and another had written, "If they do they will dirty their boots," and he was quite right.

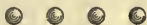


I tried to draw a man into a political discussion in the train, and he settled me at one blow. Said I, "How is it that Tories always pass better measures than Liberals?" "They're bigger liars, sir!" said he.



Mark Twain has lived in New York long enough to vote, and he says that he intends to try to elect Seth Low. When a Tammany man heard this news he said it reminded him of a story which Mark Twain once told on himself. The humorist was dining with a literary club in London, one of whose customs was that the members must introduce their guests formally and set phrases to the company. This custom pleased him, and when his turn came to express his pleasure at being present he referred to it. "I like it," he drawled, "for it reminds me of a time I lectured in a little town in the Rockies. My chairman was a well-to-do 'cow-puncher,' who found the situation evidently irksome. 'I'm told I must introduce this yer man t'ye, boys,' he said, 'but I can only see two things in his favour. One is that he's never been in gaol, and the other is that I don't know why,' and then he sat down."

At an election in Salford two cows were marched through the streets of that town, one miserably lean, the other beautifully fat. The lean cow bore a placard on its back in bold type, "Conservative Rule, and Bad Trade and Low Wages," and the fat cow was labelled "Liberal Rule, and Good Trade and High Wages." An inquiry proved that the fat cow had been bred and fed by a Conservative farmer, and the thin one by a Liberal! The fat ox was roasted at Belle Vue, when a dinner was given to the Liberal canvassers.



This, to my mind, is the best election address I ever saw:—

Middlesbrough Municipal Election.

To the Electors of the North-West Ward.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Next Thursday under cover of the ballot box you will be able to vote for whom you please. My name will stand first on the ballot paper, and I venture to hope you may see fit that it should head the poll.

Yours respectfully,

CHARLES EPHRAGE.

Committee Rooms: 177, Newport Road.



Mr. Marshall Hall, M.P., at Manchester, once lapsed into verse after this fashion:—

Said Campbell to Banner, "I think I'm the man
To preside o'er the Liberal Party."

Said Banner to Comphell, "I doubt if you can
For want of encouragement hearty."

"No matter," said Campbell, "I'm a host in myself,
A procourant politician;
And if Campbell should fall, I've Banner as well,
And good Mr. Man in addition."

So Campbell then tried with Banner beside
To gain his most ordent ambition,
But, alas for his pride, it can't be denied,
He met with but open sedition.

And this partnership firm did nothing but squirm
At the merciless Unionist gibe,
So they altered their plan, and got rid of Man,
And Campbell and Banner beside,

"The Outlook" gives under the head of "Plays and Politicians":—

"The Second in Command"—Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.

"The Importance of Being Earnest"—Lord Rosebery.

"The Awakening"—The Duke of Devonshire.

"The Swashbuckler"—Sir W. V. Harcourt.

"The Sentimentalist"—Mr. John Morley.

"The Manœuvres of Jane"—Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman.

"The Gaiety Girl"—Mr. Ritchie.

"Liberty Hall"—Mr. H. H. Asquith.

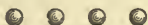
"The Great Millionaire"—Mr. Andrew Carnegie.

"Beyond Human Power"—Mr. Walter Long.

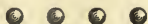
"Sweet and Twenty"—Mr. Winston Churchill.

"Are You a Mason?"—Mr. Henry Broadhurst.

"The Last of the Dandies"—Mr. Labouchere.



When Lord George Hamilton (who is a poor sailor, but formerly First Lord of the Admiralty) was going to speak at a concert-meeting, the chairman unconsciously caused roars of laughter by announcing, "We will first have an appropriate song, 'The Longshoreman'—You know it, 'For I ain't no sailor bold, and I never was on the sea!'"



My brother was canvassing at a municipal election at Oldham. Knocking at a door, a voice was heard saying, "Come in." A woman was seated sewing. "Does Mr. Whitehead live here?" "Yes." "Can I see him?" "No, you cannot; can't you see I'm mending his shirt."

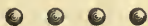


It has been remarked that if a tax was put on lies, some politicians would soon clear off the National Debt.



In Parliament, on April 18th, 1899, Mr. Steadman, M.P., created great amusement by innocently remarking, "I not only represent my constituency, I live in it, and, Mr. Speaker, I was practically born in it." When the laughter had subsided, he explained, "I mean I first saw the light in an adjoining parish."

At a bye-election, just as a train was moving out of a station, one of my fellow passengers was very wild to see his luggage on the platform. He shouted to an aged porter, "Why didn't you put my luggage in as I told you, you old fool?" "Your luggage is not such a fool as you are; don't you know you are in the wrong train?"



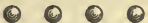
It was at the beginning of the war, when the announcement was made that Australians were to be sent to South Africa. Kruger sent for General Joubert, and asked him whether he knew anything about these Australians. "Well," replied Joubert, "I don't know much about them; but I am told that eleven of them beat All England a year or two back." "Good heavens!" exclaimed Oom Paul, "And they are sending two thousand of them here!"



A gentleman distributing bills in a small village met a young rustic, and, on handing him a bill, remarked, "Give this to your daddie, my lad. Is he a Conservative?" "Noa," said the boy "Then is he a Liberal?" "Noa." "What is he then?" "A farm labourer."

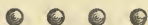


Scene: A public-house in Reading. Enter G. W. Palmer, the Liberal candidate. G. W. P.: "Good morning, Mr. Smith. I have called to ask you to vote for me." Mr. Smith: "I would with pleasure, Mr. Palmer, if you were a Conservative." G. W. P.: "Oh, Mr. Smith, you surely don't expect me to change my opinions?" Mr. Smith: "Then why the —— (angel) should you expect me to change mine?"



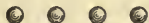
Dr. Tristram was asked at a Conservative meeting in the county of Durham if he was "in favour of marriage with a deceased wife's sister," and he caused roars of laughter by replying, "Yes, on one condition." The audience cried out, "What is that?" to which he said, "On condition that it is made compulsory."

It occurs in everybody's history that on some particular day everything goes wrong—accident follows accident, and one's best laid schemes are completely wrecked. I had an experience a couple of winters ago at Caton which I think can hardly be equalled. It was a lantern lecture at the Institute. We were sending our paraphernalia down by train, with a lad in charge. There were five parcels, and we impressed upon him when he got out of the train at Caton to count and make sure that he had five, so that he would leave nothing behind. Unluckily, just as he was setting off an overcoat was given him also to look after. Well, when he got out at Caton he picked his parcels up, counted them—five in all—and set off. As it happened, the overcoat made six, but he only counted five, leaving behind him in the carriage the box of lantern slides—the most important of all our properties. That was mistake number one. Just as we were starting the meeting we discovered we had no slides. We telephoned to the various stations, but heard nothing of them. Subsequently we learned that the box was carried to Wennington and there put out. That was error number two. At Wennington they put it on the next train back to Lancaster, and the guard put it out at Hornby, which was error number three. The Hornby station-master happened to know there was a meeting at Caton, so he put the box back in the train, but as there was no Caton address on it and there was no one waiting for it at Caton station, it passed through and went to Morecambe, which was error number four.

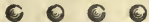


Meanwhile, as the box of slides was thus travelling up and down the line, we were doing our best to track it. Learning that it had been put out at Hornby we sent a lad down on a bicycle to fetch it, but he ran into a ditch and smashed his bike, which was disaster number five. Then we sent a second lad on a bike. He met a porter, asked him if he had seen the box, and learning that he hadn't he came back. (Error number six.) Considering that the porter had not been on duty at the station it was not likely that he should have heard anything of it. It was now time to begin the meeting. We put the chairman up "just for five minutes." He pluckily held the fort half an hour and then collapsed. There was no sign of the slides, so I appealed for volunteer singers to while away the time. Our advertised vocalist had had a spill on the way with his "bike" and had not turned up when we wanted him. (Mistake number seven.) A gentleman present offered a song, and a lady volunteered to play. She sat down to the piano, struck the keys with a graceful

touch, but lo, there was no sound. She struck them again, she ran her fingers up and down the scale, but there was never a sound. It nearly struck us dumb. There was the singer waiting to start, the pianist banging at the instrument, but not a note coming from it. In despair she called upon me; I called upon the hallkeeper; then the truth came out. The inside of the piano had been taken out and put in a warm place (a cupboard), and our lady accompanist was simply seated on an empty case. That was mistake number eight. Well, we fetched the "inside" into the room, and I shall never forget the screams of the audience as the hallkeeper, a big man, and myself, a little one, staggered on the platform with the inside of that piano and jammed it in.

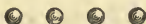


Well, we went on with the meeting best way we could. We were relying on the light from the lantern, but as soon as the singer started it went clean out. (Disaster number nine.) The gas lights had been kept in, but only faintly, so I now called on the hallkeeper to turn them up. He got a long pole, but of course he put them right out. (Disaster number ten.) Thus, amid continual laughter, we got to the end of the meeting. Then we missed our train—(blunder number eleven)—and had to borrow bicycles to come home on, and of course one of the party—the reporter—had to get a puncture. (Accident number twelve.) When I got home I made the discovery that I had lost my latch-key on the road, which was the thirteenth and last accident. I think I might safely defy anyone to find such a record of accidents for a single night. To this day the very mention of that meeting makes people smile at Caton. I should add that the slides turned up next day from Morecambe.

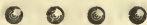


A colliery manager moving a vote of thanks to me, talked of a "thorough reform in their local organisation." He said:—Did they know what a thorough reform was? He would explain it by a little story. There was a Yankee who had a dog, a very ugly dog indeed, and he wanted to improve it. So he went to a friend and said, "I think I shall cut an inch or two off that dog's tail." And the other Yankee said, "An inch or two off his tail is no good; you must cut his tail off two inches behind his ears." That was what he called a "thorough reform." Let them destroy what they had and start afresh.

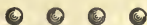
Speaking against over-confidence and the loss of a seat a Conservative speaker narrated the amusing story of the man who was following his wife to the grave. On the way there the hearse caught the corner of a bridge, when a voice from the coffin exclaimed, "What's that?" and it was found that the woman was not really dead. Some years after the wife really did die, and the sorrowing husband again followed her to the grave; but as they approached the unfortunate spot, the loving husband sobbed out in his grief, "Mind the corner of the bridge!" Well, said the speaker, this division had had one unfortunate experience, but in future he would tell them to "Mind the corner of the bridge."



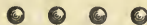
In a country village, and not certain of my geography, I said to a rough-looking hobblehehoy, "I want to go to the railway station." "Well, why don't you go there?" said he.



Ridiculing the silly promises of a Radical candidate, I heard a friend of mine most effectively tell this story, to illustrate his meaning. A young man was courting and called on the father, who asked, "Do you, then, love my daughter?" He replied, "Love her—why, for one glance of her eye I could die, for one smile I would willingly take myself to yonder crag and fling myself to the rocks beneath, a battered, broken, and bleeding corpse!" The old man, when he regained his breath, said, "Young man, I'm a bit of a liar myself, and as our's is a small family one is enough!"

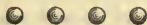


"Be Jabers, if the candidates don't put more life into it they will both lose!" said an Irishman in the Scotland Division of Liverpool, who was disgusted at finding the polling proceeding so quietly.

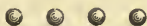


An old farmer at a Conservative dinner said he was no talker, "but he could say our Member of Parliament is a fine old English gentleman, his policy is the roast beef of old England, and our motto is no surrender."

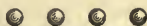
The wife of a friend of mine was ridiculing his speech at a Primrose League meeting, and he charged her with talking instead of listening. She protested she had heard every word of it. "Well, what was the speech about?" he suddenly demanded, and she readily replied, "It was about ten minutes too long!"



I once went to hear a lecture on "Gladstone," by a Nonconformist minister, and the meeting was opened with prayer by one of his congregation. Among other funny things said was this, "O Lord, bless our minister, bless his wife, and all other things he has to put up with."

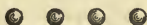


Exhibiting a Liberal bill headed with the words, "Peace, Retrenchment, Reform," I recently heard a friend of mine say, "In the first place let me remind you that the motto is not exactly new, because five and fifty years ago there was a book written called 'Ten thousand a year,' and in the novel there is an account of the election of Timothy Tittlebat-Titmouse, Esq., to the Imperial Parliament, and I recollect a picture in that book represented Tittlebat on a platform addressing an audience, and on that platform is the motto, 'Peace, Retrenchment, Reform.'"



Mr. W. Whiteley, M.P., said the big egg of that session, so far as working men were concerned, was the passing of Mr. Kemp's Preferential Payments in Bankruptcy Bill, which was a measure of equity and justice to all. And what was more, that little Act hatched out. They could all of them introduce Bills into Parliament, but when it came to passing them there was oftener a hitch than a hatch. But Mr. Kemp sat on and hatched the Bill out. He persevered—like an old hen, which having no eggs to sit on, found a pound of sausages, and sat on them, and was now strutting about, cackling and clucking, as proud as a dog with two tails, and followed by a promising brood of three small puppies and two kittens.

At the time when the Home Rule question was most acute, Mr. Chamberlain spent a few days with Sir William Harcourt in May, 1888. As he was going away, the visitors' book was brought out for him to write his name, and he was beginning to squeeze it in at the bottom of a page, where there was scarcely any room, when Sir William stopped him and said jocularly, "Come now, Chamberlain, after all I have said, the least you can do is to give me an earnest of your good intentions by turning over a new leaf here." But the guest affected not to hear him, and obstinately went on writing where he had begun. "I stick to my old side, you see," he said drily.



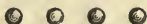
"What is your opinion of Tariff Reform?" asked one man of another. "I aint agoing to say. I threshed that matter out before with Bill Grey." Luring him on his friend asked, "and what did you arrive at?" The reply settled the matter. "Well, evenchually Bill arrived at the 'orspital, an' I arrived at the police station!"



"A substitute" at a political meeting, unable to fill up the whole time allotted to him, told the tale of a preacher who apologised in the vestry of a strange church for the shortness of his sermon, and laying the blame on a dog which, he said, had destroyed some pages of his manuscript, and of the appeal of the clerk in response, "Oh, sir, could you spare a pup for our vicar?"

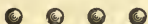


At the Thanet bye-election the Chairman invited questions. A voice: "May I ask why Mr. Marks dubs himself a Thanet man?" Mr. Marks: "Because for fifteen years I have lived in Thanet." The voice: "Were you born in Thanet?" Mr. Marks: "No, but that is not my fault. I should have been if I had been asked." (Laughter and cheers.)

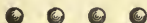


A man once asked the late Colonel Eyre at the beginning of a lecture "Shall I ask questions at the end, or contradict the lies as you tell them?"

An Irish member, Mr. Edward J. Synan, was remarkable for his loud voice. One day he got up in the House and the moment he did so Mr. James Lowther, who at that time was Irish Secretary, hastily rose to leave the Chamber. An angry Irish member feeling that the proper place for the Chief Secretary was the Treasury bench, shouted after him, "Lowther, where are you going?" Mr. Lowther shouted back as he disappeared, "I'm going out on the terrace to hear Synan."

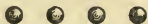


A portly lady whose charms could not be said to be in her appearance was addressing a Liberal meeting, on "Temperance Reform," and while dilating on the evils of drink made the following statement: "My friends, I myself had a husband who was addicted to the bottle. He was a great trial to me, but one day I persuaded him to take the pledge. He did so, and oh, my joy was so great, so overwhelming, that I flung my arms round his neck and kissed him." "And sarve 'im jolly well right too," added a voice from the crowd.



A chairman at a bye-election meeting congratulated himself on the fact that his side "had got in the first blow." Now, although the quoted phrase has a common significance, there was something in the man's manner indicating that the "blow" in this case was of an out-of-the-way kind. Acceding to request, the chairman became explanatory, as thus:—"Getting in the first blow," he continued, "reminds me of a story. A farmer went up to a vet's house to ask what he was to do about his horse, which had been taken very ill. 'Give him this powder,' said the vet. An hour after the farmer came up again and said that he couldn't get the horse to take the powder. 'Oh,' said the vet, 'I forgot! Put this tube down his throat, and then lay the powder in the tube and blow it down his throat.' Within half an hour the farmer came running up to the vet's, in a shocking state of excitement and livid with fear. 'What's up now with the man?' said the vet. 'Didn't you do as I told you?' 'Yes,' said the farmer. 'I put the tube down his throat and laid the powder in it, but the horse had the first blow!'" Chuckling to himself long after the laughter had subsided, my chairman again insisted, "Always a good thing to get in the first blow."

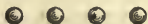
The late Mr. James Merry, M.P., was addressing an open-air meeting near Carron, when a collier just up from the pit, unwashed and unashamed, edged near the platform, and opened his heckling thus:—"Maister Merry, if we pit ye in again well ye tak the duty aff whisky?" Merry took stock of his man. "Weel, chappy," he said, "I'm thinkin', seeing the state you're in, that it would be far better if I took the duty off soap!"



When the late Mr. J. Lowther was Secretary for Ireland a solemn-visaged farmer rose to heckle him at one of his meetings. In sepulchral tones he exclaimed, "What you've been saying is all very well, but what I want to know is whether you hold with the Athanasian Creed?" Mr. Lowther's placid brow puckered for a moment. He had not the least idea what to say. Then his face lit up with a beatific smile as an inspiration dawned upon him. "On the whole, yes," he answered with immense gravity. "Yes, for all of us who have to do with land must appreciate the force of the noble precept, 'Cursed be he who removeth his neighbour's landmark.'"

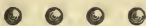


Another story is told of the late member when on one occasion he went to support the claims of a Parliamentary candidate. "Come, Jimmy, give us a tip for the Grand National!" cried a sporting elector. "I never made a bet in my life," replied Mr. Lowther, who rose equal to the occasion, "but if you take my advice you will give 3 to 1 against the field, including my friend, the Grand Old Man."



It occurred in Scotland, at a meeting held to choose a candidate for Parliament, and, owing to the laird's absence, a hoary old farmer of the old school was voted to the chair. He looked about him for a few minutes after this signal and unexpected honour, and then, getting up on his feet, addressed the meeting as follows: "I thank ye all very much for the honour ye've dune me. I've been at these meetings afore, an' I ken what tae dæ. I'll put the resolution first. All for our friend Sandy show yer hands. Five for him! Noo, then, all against. Fifteen! Majority chuck the ithers oot, an' let's gang on wi' oor meeting."

Major Noble, Conservative candidate for Appleby, speaking of Retaliation, said:—"You may have heard the story of an old woman going past a farm, when a dog came and attacked her. She had a pitchfork with her, and drove the dog off, sending the prongs into the animal's flesh. The farmer came out and said, 'You should not have done that, you should have used the butt end.' 'Yes,' replied the old woman, 'but the dog didn't come at me with his butt end!'" She retaliated in a double sense effectively.



M.P.: "Did you tell that reporter I had nothing to say?"

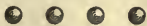
Servant: "Yes, sir."

M.P.: "I suppose he was very much disappointed."

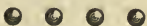
Servant: "I hardly know, sir. He said he was aware of the fact that you never said anything, but was under the impression that you never missed an opportunity to talk."



A comparison once drawn between the methods of English and Irish Town Councils in meeting assembled, is very droll. "You complain of the way your Town Councils conduct their business," said a member, at a meeting to protest against the vagaries of a Yorkshire Council. "Shure, down in County Kerry, long before th' meetin's come to a close, the clerk is dhrinkin' th' ink and signin' th' cheques with whisky!"

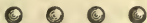


A rather arrogant and self-sufficient political critic was enlightening a dinner-party at which Mr. Hill was present on the state of political parties. "In a word," he said, "the Liberals, generally speaking, are knaves and the Conservatives fools." "I believe," quietly observed Hill, "that you, Mr. —, are a Liberal-Conservative!"

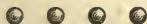


Canvasser: "What is your husband, madam, on this Fiscal question?" Lady of the house: "When he is among Protectionists he's a Free Trader, and when he is among Free Traders he's a Protectionist, and when he's at home he's a blooming nuisance!"

Ridiculing Mr. Chamberlain's proposals on "Tariff Reform," a speaker said:—"We are doing very well. See that we don't go from bad to worse—which reminds me of a story. I knew a man once whose wife suffered from freckles. Seeing a freckle-removing lotion advertised, he wrote for a bottle. A month after he was able to write to the lotion-vendor as follows:—'Dear sir, my wife suffered badly from freckles. She used one bottle of your lotion. All freckles have disappeared, but she has been suffering from strong convulsions ever since.'"



One of the brightest and most original proposals that have been made for some time comes from Mr. W. H. Cowan, Liberal candidate for the Guildford Division. He suggests that during the election campaign he himself should address the other party's meetings, while Mr. Brodrick, his opponent, expounds Conservative views to the Liberals. It is an eminently practical idea. After all, what is the use of preaching to those who are already converted?



Here is a dog story told at a meeting during the South African war. A man had a dog given him, and being asked its name, admitted he did not know. "Call him Balfour." "No, I won't insult the statesman." "Call him Campbell-Bannerman." "No, I won't insult the dog." "Well, then, call him Kruger." Whereupon the dog bit a piece out of the speaker's leg.

FINIS.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

APR 19 1950
MAY 5 1950

JUN 3 1950

MAR 17 1951

MAR 24 1951

MAY 11 1951

DEC 8 1951

JAN 7 1952

APR 18 1952

MAR 18 1954

FEB 25 1955

MAY 31 1955

MAY 10 1955

REC'D LD-URE

JUN 2 1983

JUL 1 1983

REC'D LD-URE

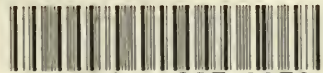
REC'D LD-URE

OCT 21 1985

MAY 11 1987

Form L
25m-10, '41 (2191)

UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY



3 1158 00835 9050

h

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 360 920 3

STACK ANNEX



